



# THE INDEPENDENT

TUESDAY 6 MAY 1997

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**BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS: A TERRORIST'S TALE**

COMMENT PAGE 17

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## Blair goes presidential

**A tough and centralised regime is announced by staff at Number 10**

Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

The firm smack of presidential-style government was unveiled yesterday, as Tony Blair's senior staff made it clear that Number 10 is to control Whitehall departments in a much more direct and personal way than ever before.

Jonathan Powell, Mr Blair's chief-of-staff, has told departments that all policy pronouncements must be co-ordinated from Downing Street, and Alastair Campbell, the new press secretary, has informed all departmental press chiefs that media bids for interviews with their ministers must be cleared first with him.

This follows the appointment of Peter Mandelson as a minister without portfolio to keep a close eye on other ministers on Mr Blair's behalf. The Prime Minister has also appointed Sally Morgan as his political secretary, and it will be her job to make sure that the party "marches in step" with the Government.

She will work closely with Nick Brown, the new Chief Whip, to ensure that MPs toe the party line - backed up by the party's new disciplinary code of conduct. Mr Morgan, 37, was one of the party officers who helped Neil Kinnock purge the Trotskyist Militant Tendency from the party in the 1980s.

One Downing Street source said last night that Mr Blair was particularly keen to ensure that the Government harnesses the energy and enthusiasm of the new Parliamentary Labour Party - which is so big that there is no Commons room large enough to hold its weekly meetings.

Mr Blair will not allow the party to become the master of the Government, as happened to John Major. He wanted none of the free-for-all, roller-coasting that had



Tony Blair and his presidential-style team: political secretary Sally Morgan, Peter Mandelson (centre), and press secretary Alastair Campbell  
Photomontage: Jonathan Anstee

taken place under the Conservatives. One well-informed observer said last night that while many prime ministers had wanted to hold the reins of power, a presidential system was difficult to maintain in Britain because of the weight and authority of the departments of state.

However, he added: "All the signs suggest that if what Mr Blair is planning works, then he could make Lloyd George and Margaret Thatcher look like two of nature's natural co-operators."

Mr Mandelson said on Sunday: "I think what he will want to do is to create a strong centre in government, so that all its various arms and de-

partments have a very clear sense of their own direction."

His job, officially designated Minister without Portfolio, appears to be modelled closely on the Deputy Prime Minister's post held by Michael Heseltine in the last government - but without the Cabinet clout. Mr Mandelson will help with the "strategic implementation of our policies", he will "make sure that our programme is kept on track", and

also "ensure that [the] government's policies are effectively presented to the public and to the party."

One constitutional expert said last night that he understood why Mr Blair was attempting to create a "command model" of government - "It is all too understandable; a bit like lottery winners hinging their money."

But he feared that it would end in tears. He said that people who tried to impose an iron hand, and failed, were all too often depicted as "losing their grip."

Some Labour MPs were also contrasting the centralisation of command and control within the Government and party with Labour's

commitment to greater decentralisation and devolution of government in their election manifesto.

But Mr Blair was said last night to be enjoying his first few days of office immensely - and, with a massive Commons majority, a broadly supportive press, and firm City markets, he has much to celebrate on his 44th birthday today.

Yesterday, he completed another round of ministerial appointments, moving a number of supporters into strategic positions throughout Whitehall. While some Blairites moved directly into the minister of state posts they had previously shadowed - Alan Michael to the Home Office; Tessa Jowell to Health; John Reid over to Defence - others were switched, including Stephen Byers, to take on schools at Education, and Alan Milburn, who jumped from Treasury to Health.

But Mr Blair added a dash of zest and inspiration to an otherwise worthy list of appointments last night, with the announcement that Tony Banks, backbench live wire and parliamentary wit, had been made Minister for Sport.

He had been cooking pasta when the phone call from Downing Street came. "I was completely gobsmacked. I didn't expect anything, certainly not this," he said.

"Having thought about it, I said yes. I wasn't one of those spending any time by the telephone and therefore I was completely surprised."

The Conservative Party last night announced that Michael Heseltine was leaving Horton General Hospital in Banbury to travel to London's Harley Street Clinic, where he will undergo an angiogram. "The doctors are delighted with Mr Heseltine's progress and expect him to be home by the end of the week," a party spokesman said.

### We're friends and we want a fresh start, Henderson tells EU partners

The Labour government yesterday sought to secure a role at the heart of Europe by confirming it would sign the Social Chapter and make a "fresh start" in relations with its partners, writes Sarah Helm in Brussels.

"We want to work with you as colleagues in a shared enterprise. Not using the language of opponents," said Doug Henderson, the new minister for Europe, who yesterday took over the British reins in talks on European Union reform.

Mr Henderson also confirmed that the Government

would accept an employment chapter in the new Amsterdam treaty, and would be ready to make compromises on extension of qualified majority voting in order to sign a deal at Amsterdam in June.

Britain's partners welcomed the shift to the European "mainstream". However, signs that Labour is likely to run into clashes with Tory Euro-sceptics emerged as the European Commission detailed plans for more legislation under the Social Chapter and questioned the government's powers to reduce VAT on fuel.

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## The era of the council house may return under Prescott

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

The council house could enjoy a return to favour under John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, who is seeking support from Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, for an ambitious plan to build more council houses with private-sector money.

There were estimates yesterday from the housing industry that giving councils the freedom to borrow money from building societies and banks could provide enough cash from the private sector to build 100,000 council houses a year.

Mr Prescott, who was given

exclusive

responsibility by Tony Blair for local authorities as part of his "super ministry" for the Environment and Transport, wants to give the councils the same freedom as housing associations to borrow money from private firms using housing stock and rent flows as assets. He is also keen to boost public-private investment in the London Underground.

The Deputy Prime Minister will seek to damp down unrealistic expectations in his first major speech today, in a speech to the engineering union con-

ference in Jersey, but he is keen to show that a Blair government can make a difference in Britain, by investing more in decaying public services, and creating jobs, without increasing taxes.

Treasury civil servants may object to the plan on the grounds that it would add to the public sector borrowing requirement. But Mr Brown is sympathetic to the need for more public and private partnerships, and housing professionals are keen to give it their backing. It is part of a clear effort to establish a closer relationship between the Deputy Prime Minister and the Chancellor for delivering what Mr Blair promised would be a

"radical" government.

Chris Holmes, the director of the housing charity Shelter, said yesterday: "The two forms of social housing are similar and it is total anomaly that local authorities are restricted by public sector expenditure regulations from borrowing while housing associations who are heavily reliant on the public grants are free to do so."

Labour is committed to the controlled release of some of the estimated £5-7bn receipts from council house sales to build more council houses, but that would provide enough to build an estimated 14,000 homes a year with 30,000 renovations. A cross-party Commons select committee last year pointed to the need to build 100,000 a year to meet the need for social housing.

Shelter estimates that there is a backlog of housing repairs costing £20bn that needs to be tackled. The Prescott plan could help to revive council housing to levels that last existed under Labour in the 1970s.

It dwindled to about 1,000 council house starts last year after the Tories switched the funding to housing associations. The associations have raised around £10bn from the private sector for social housing to rent.

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### QUICKLY

#### Childbirth rebellion

Rebel members of the National Childbirth Trust are threatening a mass breakaway from the 40-year-old charity. The dispute has been running for months after shocked members discovered that the trustees had, without consultation, accepted conference sponsorship from the supermarket chain Sainsbury's, which sells an own-brand milk substitute. Page 4

#### Search for boys

A large search involving police, coastguards and civilians was under way last night for two boys who went missing in marshes on the Lincolnshire coast. The body of their friend, Christopher Scott, aged 11, who was with them when they left for a bicycle ride on Sunday, was found on the marshes near Mablethorpe yesterday morning. Page 4

#### Kinshasa warned

Zairean rebel radio warned citizens of Kinshasa to stay away from "strategic areas", saying the first attack on the capital could come at any time. The warnings follow the inconclusive results of this weekend's peace talks in Congo. Page 11

#### Gold rush over

The Canadian firm Bre-X Minerals that lured investors by boasting the gold find of the century was headed for oblivion yesterday after experts exposed the claim as one of the world's biggest mining scams. An independent consultant company said the supposed gold find in Bussang, Borneo was no paltry mine. Page 18

## Is Ben Needham alive and in Germany?



Ben Needham: Vanished years ago in Greece

Kathy Marks

It is six years since 21-month-old Ben Needham vanished on the Greek island of Kos, but his family have never given up hope of finding him and pursue each new lead with undiminished energy.

The latest suggestion is that Ben is in Germany. The Foreign Office said it had passed "certain information" to the German authorities and was keeping in close touch with them.

The source of the fresh information is a Greek citizen serving a prison sentence for armed robbery. He contacted Ben's grandparents, Eddie and Christine Needham, after seeing an appeal by them on Greek television. The man told the Needhams that the boy had been abducted by a gypsy gang, taken to northern Greece and then on to Germany.

Ben's relatives said yesterday that they were trying not to be too optimistic. "We have had information which has been

passed on to the German police about a Greek couple living in Germany who know where Ben is," Mrs Needham said at her home in Sheffield.

"We are now waiting for the German authorities to interview that couple. According to our informant, the couple know where Ben is and who he is with." The prisoner claims to be related to the couple, one of whom is said to be a waiter in a Greek restaurant. The names and locations have not been disclosed, but according to some

reports, German police have mounted a surveillance operation on the restaurant and are preparing to move in.

The British authorities are taking the latest information seriously but are anxious not to overplay it. There have been more than 200 reported sightings of Ben since he disappeared in July 1991 - all false.

Mrs Needham said yesterday: "We don't want to raise our hopes too high. There is always the possibility our informant was lying, for whatever reason."

DAVID HELFGOTT

Brilliantissime

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news

significant shorts

Eleven protesters arrested after factory break-in

Eleven people were being questioned by police yesterday after protesters opposed to the export of armoured vehicles to Indonesia breached security at a factory which manufactures them.

Six men and three women were detained when police were called to the Glover Webb factory at Hamble, near Southampton, in the early hours of the morning. Later another man and woman, found within the perimeter of the factory, were also arrested. A spokesman for the company, part of the GKN group, said: "They daubed some slogans, all of which have now been washed off."

The spokesman added that the company was not directly involved in the arms trade, but built light armoured vehicles, some of which had been supplied to Indonesia after a government export licence had been obtained.

Among the protesters detained was said to be Angie Zelter - one of four women acquitted at Liverpool Crown Court last year of causing millions of pounds worth of damage to a BAe Hawk jet. In an earlier statement, Ms Zelter claimed that the Indonesian police and army were likely to use the armoured vehicles for "gross human rights abuses".

Urgent talks over ICI chemical leaks

Environment Agency officials are seeking urgent talks with the senior management of ICI over chemical leaks, the agency announced yesterday.

The move follows separate chemical leaks within hours of each other at two ICI plants. In the first incident roads were closed and residents told to stay indoors when highly inflammable naphtha gas escaped from the Seal Sands site, at Seaton Carew, Cleveland, at 4am on Sunday. Three-and-a-half hours later there was a spill involving the dry-cleaning chemical trichloroethylene at the ICI plant in Runcorn, in Cheshire. The chemical spilled into a nearby canal.

Meanwhile, in an unrelated incident, thousands of fish died in a stretch of the Medway Estuary between New Hythe and Wouldham in Kent on Sunday, after a river was polluted by a mystery substance, the Environment Agency said yesterday. "We are treating this as a Category One incident - the most serious," an agency spokesman said.

Europe backs lung cancer fund



Europe has given a £120,000 boost to the Roy Castle Foundation to support its battle to stop young people smoking.

The grant, from the EU's public-health directorate, will provide 80 per cent of the funding for a smoking-prevention project in primary schools in the UK, France and Portugal. Roy Castle (left), the entertainer and broadcaster, died in 1994, aged 62, after a two-and-a-half-year fight against the disease; his foundation is the only UK charity dedicated solely to defeating lung cancer.

Fertility treatment under threat

The Birmingham Health Authority is proposing to stop assisted-conception treatment on the NHS unless there are exceptional medical or social circumstances, in a bid to reduce spending.

The plan, which would mean that most childless couples in the area would have to seek help from private organisations, has the backing of local public opinion which, according to a recent survey, sees fertility treatment as expensive and low priority. Dr Jacky Chambers, Director of Public Health, will present a paper to the Birmingham Health Authority this week, recommending that the authority backs the recent survey which concluded that routine NHS funding of fertility treatment should cease. Most people interviewed for the survey said cancer treatment should be well-funded, and saw assisted-conception services as the having the lowest priority.

Dutch brothers missing in London

Police are concerned for the safety of two Dutch boys who disappeared early yesterday while holidaying with their parents in London.

The brothers, aged 12 and 15, were last seen at 2am when they changed money at the Dolphin Hotel, Pimlico, central London, where the family had been staying. The eldest brother, Mario Jansen, has collar-length, slicked back brown hair and brown eyes and is 5ft 8in tall. He was wearing metal-rimmed glasses, a red and grey striped sweater, a grey and green leather jacket, black jeans and brown shoes. The younger brother, Cornelius, also known as Kenny, has brown collar-length hair and brown eyes and is 5ft 6in tall. He was wearing a white T-shirt, black jeans, black and white trainers and a black plastic jacket.

Shining a light on mobile phones

The ultimate Irish folly - a lighthouse built 30 miles inland more than 200 years ago - has been restored to boost reception for mobile telephones.

The 100ft folly, known as the Tower of Lloyd, stands near the town of Kells, County Meath, where it was built by the Marquess of Headfort in 1791. It has been rented by the local council to Esai Digifone, a recently-established telecommunications company, for use as a base station - and the income has permitted a children's playground to be built at its base.

people



Paul McCartney: His career has broken yet another record (Photograph: Linda McCartney)

Sir Paul goes on-line for the biggest interview of his life

Sir Paul McCartney famously sang "Let me be an ear and I'll sing you a song". Later this month he intends to update the means of communication.

In what organisers believe may be the biggest question-and-answer session on the Internet, the recently-knighted former Beatle will face 1 million questions, put to him by fans using the electronic medium.

"If Sir Paul - whose new album, *Flaming Pie*, was released yesterday, spent one minute answering each of the 1 million questions lodged so far, he would have to talk non-stop for one year and 11 months."

Instead, he will attempt to get through as many as possible in 90 minutes, in an event at the Bishopsgate Memorial Hall in the City of London on 17 May.

McCartney fans without Internet access will be able to watch him on the satellite television channel VH1, which will be screening the session live from 6pm GMT in Britain, Germany and the US.

Sir Paul said: "It's an awful lot to ask of anyone. I don't think we'll get through all the questions - but we'll give it a go."

His publicist, Geoff Baker, said it was amazing the response had been so big. "We are trying to get an entry in the Guinness Book of Records. It could be for the most questions asked on the Internet."

"I don't know if they have a category of the most interviewed man on the planet."

Mr Baker said it was impossible to guess how many questions there would be by the day of the event. "The sky's the limit."

Anyone wishing to put a question can send it to <http://www.vh1.com> or AOL Keyword VH1; the Flaming Pie site at <http://flamingpie.com>.

The new album features a photograph of Sir Paul (above), taken by his wife, Linda, who has been fighting cancer. It includes songs to her and tells of his happiness at how successful her recovery so far has been.

The album is Sir Paul's first since 1993. Linda and the Beatles' drummer, Ringo Starr, are featured.

Louise Jury

Indian chief's body to find final rest

The remains of an American Native Indian chief who died in Britain while taking part in the European tour of the legendary "Wild West Show" run by Buffalo Bill Cody (right) are to be exhumed and returned to his tribal homeland, it was reported yesterday.

Chief Long Wolf, of the Sioux tribe, in South Dakota, died and was buried in Brompton Cemetery, London, on 13 June, 1892, after contracting bronchial pneumonia. He was 59.

His grave was forgotten until it was "discovered" by Elizabeth Knight, 56, who lives in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire.

She read about Long Wolf in an old book, traced his family in America and helped them campaign for his remains to be returned.

John Black Feather, 60, who is Long Wolf's great great grandson applied to the American authorities for permission for the repatriation.

Permission was granted, and it is thought likely that the British authorities will act accordingly, although the Church will have to give its approval.

It is understood plots have already been set aside for long



Wolf at the Wolf Creek Community Cemetery, Pine Ridge, South Dakota, home of the Sioux nation.

Earring handicaps golfing doctor

A doctor has been expelled by his golf club in a row over a silver earring. Dr Stephen Glascoe, 46, yesterday said he was baffled by the expulsion, claiming he had worn an earring for more than 20 years without anyone objecting.

Officials of The Ridgeway Golf Course, near Caerphilly, South Wales, told him his earring was judged unacceptable by fellow golfers on the nine-hole course.

"I was told that I would have to remove my earring if I wanted to continue as a member there," said the doctor, who plays off an 18 handicap. "I cannot understand why I am being banned now, because I had even played some competitions at The Ridgeway without anyone mentioning it. My earring has never been a problem at other courses I've also played in. I started work in 1978."

"When Tiger Woods won the US Masters recently, a lot of people hoped it would help end the image of golf as a sport riven with snobbery and prejudice. This shows there's still a long way to go."

Larry Baynton, club captain at the Ridgeway, said Dr Glascoe had been the only member to refuse to abide by the club's dress code. Female golfers were not affected because earrings were considered "a natural dress code for women".

briefing

HERITAGE

National Trust blamed for 'soulless' stateley homes

The National Trust has turned the nation's stateley homes into soulless time capsules deadened by hidebound tradition, a magazine claims today. *Harpers & Queen* said critics had accused the trust, which looks after many stateley homes, landscapers and monuments, of being too bureaucratic and unfriendly, and said it was not making as much money as it should, because it was a stickler for tradition and authenticity.

The trust "has come under criticism for creating time capsules rather than capturing the spirit of a place, and has evolved a rigid practice of mothballing houses during the winter", the magazine says in its June edition.

Meanwhile, privately owned country homes could "evolve and change at the owners' discretion".

The stateley home at Ragley, Warwickshire, owned by Lord Yarmouth, made a £412,219 profit in 1994 to 1995, compared with a trust property at Kingston Lacy, Dorset, which made £79,375, the report said.

"The trust maintains its properties as historic monuments, often to a particular period, which can be extremely expensive," it said. Another problem was that only 15 per cent of the trust's houses were lived in, and that the tenants had "little or no control over what the Trust chooses to do to the house".

For instance, Sir Edmund Fairfax-Lacy cannot light a fire in his sitting room at Charlecote (below), without the trust's permission, while the Earl of Belmore had to fight the trust to prevent it painting the drawing room at Castle Coole in Northern Ireland "germoleene pink".

A National Trust spokeswoman said: "The trust was set up to preserve places of historic and natural beauty for the nation for ever. We try to keep the look of the home and contents, or of an earlier period. The trust is not there to make profit, but it is important that the house and estate is there for people to see."



IMMIGRATION

Refugees not looking for easy life

The number of refugees allowed to stay in Britain is widely overestimated, but relatively few people believe that they come to these shores in search of an easier life, according to a new survey.

The MORI research, commissioned by Oxford and the Refugee Council, found that 55 per cent of those questioned identified persecution, torture and escaping from the authorities as likely reasons for a refugee's flight.

Fewer than one in four of the nearly 2,000 people polled across Britain thought that refugees came here to escape poverty in their home countries.

The survey are published today as the Refugee Council launches a report, *Credit to the Nation*, highlighting the economic and cultural contribution of refugees to Britain.

Council chief executive Nick Hardwick said: "The MORI survey shows many people realise refugees are coming here to seek safety from persecution and not for economic reasons."

"It is wrong to portray refugees as scroungers seeking a better life - in fact they have enriched our country both economically and culturally over the centuries."

HEALTH

Drink problem worse among young

Young people in Scotland are now consuming greater quantities of alcohol at any one time, according to a new report. "This is a worrying trend and leads to a much greater incidence of drunkenness, with a consequent increase in violence and criminality," it says.

The report, by the Church of Scotland's Board of Social Responsibility, refers to a study by the Centre for Drug Misuse at Glasgow University, which found that more than half of 14-year-olds had been drunk on at least one occasion.

"It would appear that strong drink is being marketed and targeted at young people to develop in them the habit of using alcohol, and that is cynical exploitation," says the board.

This month's General Assembly of the Kirk will be asked to condemn the development of "alcoholpops" - sweetened alcoholic drinks.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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# ... and this is all the President's kit



Packing up: Out go all the shirts, the shoes, suits, ties and all the familial bits and pieces as the Blairs move out of Islington, north London, heading West

Photographs: Chris Grieve

For six weeks we have seen the front of Tony Blair: yesterday we saw the back, all the intricate workings and support structure.

The Prime Minister left his Islington house at 9am, with Alastair Campbell, his press secretary, carrying his red box. Mr Blair was dressed for the office, in contrast to Sunday's denim shirt and chinos. While he worked in Downing Street, stamping his authority on his new government with a distinctly presidential style, his wardrobe followed him and in doing so, the more human face of the new occupants of Downing Street came into public view. Only there was no

wardrobe, and the clothes had not been packed into the plastic crates, so they were carried into the back of a Ford Transit in full view of the watching press and television cameras. There they were: all the ties seen on television, on a rack. During the campaign he had brushed aside questions about the Tory colour of his tie with a "you know, first thing out of the drawer", but it did not look as if they came out of a drawer.

It was not a full move, because they are keeping the Islington house. The drapes and table

lamps of the sitting room – chintzier than the local stripped-pine norm – stay where they are. Yesterday, they just took the things they would need in Downing Street. A brass bed. An electric guitar. The amplifier. And the children's toys.

Yes, the election has changed everything. On Friday, we saw Kathryn, 9, in a baseball cap on the steps of 10 Downing Street after the whole family arrived to a tumultuous, but in some ways very personal welcome at their new home. And he sent the children in first.

On Sunday, a prime minister went to church in an open-necked shirt with his children in a Galaxy people-carrier. Yesterday, the First Family turned its house inside out – and they use wire coat-hangers too.

Kathryn and Nicholas, 11, helped with the move, carrying their own possessions to the van. Meanwhile the removal men were bringing out more suits, more crates, and more suits. Jackets with four cuff buttons. A collapsible metal clothes-rail, carried from the house and erected inside the van. Last in

were Cherie's shoes, in a big canvas shoe-holder.

Cherie herself, wearing a blue anorak, jeans and trainers followed the van to Downing Street in a maroon Montego with Euan, Nicholas and Kathryn.

Euan, 13, was wearing personal stereo headphones as the car pulled up at their destination. They went in the front door of No 10, while the van unloaded around the side of No 11, where the Blairs will actually live – above the Chancellor of the Exchequer's office and next door to the Prime Minister's.

The van was too small, and had to go back for a second load after lunch. As it set off, Mr Campbell issued the text of letter to media editors calling on them to allow the Blair children to be "left to live as normal a life as possible" once they had finished moving into their new home.

A letter to editors said Mr and Mrs Blair had wanted to share the celebration in Downing Street on Friday with their children, and accepted that there would be much interest in the family's domestic arrangements,

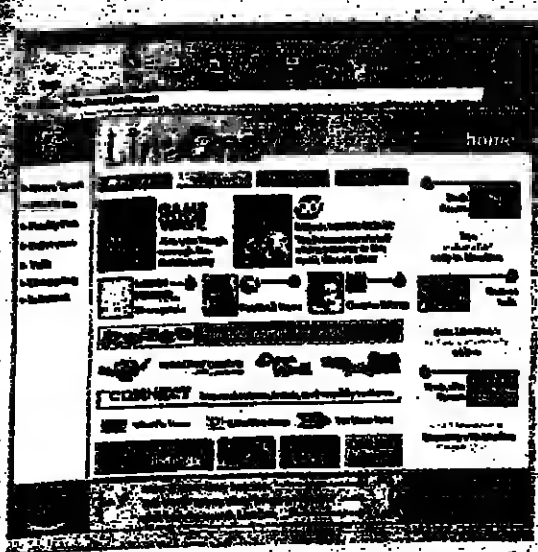
but they "are particularly concerned that they should not be troubled at school, or travelling to school".

In the second vanload, there were two large hat boxes – one from Harrods and the other from John Lewis. More clothes, mainly casual jackets and shirts. Cricket gear belonging to one of the boys. Cherie briefly appeared at the doorway in Islington with a pile of cricket stumps in her arms.

To confirm what Mr Blair has said about his children caring more about football than about politics, one removal man carried a bundled duvet bearing the badges of Manchester United.

John Rentoul

## From electric guitars to trainers, a new style is set



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# NCT in crisis over Sainsbury sponsorship

Louise Jury

It was the driving force behind the transformation of modern childbirth - deep-breathing exercises and breast-feeding instead of epidurals and infant formula.

But the National Childbirth Trust is now finding its high principles and liberal values questioned by rebel members who are threatening a mass break-away from the 40-year-old charity. The dispute has been rumbling for months after shocked members discovered the trustees had, without consultation, accepted conference sponsorship from Sainsbury's, which sells an own-brand milk substitute.

They believe this contravenes the NCT's commitment

to breast-feeding. The anger was compounded by increases in subscription rates, from £12 to £36 for new members and £1 to £5 for the unwaged, which they fear will reinforce its image as a well-off middle-class club.

Now the rift is to be aired in public after the rebels submitted special resolutions and forced an extraordinary general meeting (EGM). It is to be held in London on 3 July.

The opponents of the sponsorship deal say the trust, a network of classes and support groups, should not take money from companies which produce or sell breast-milk substitutes.

They want this principle confirmed at the EGM and have set up a fund, the EGM Information Trust, to help publicise

their concerns. If they fail, they may form a new charity.

Sheila Kitzinger, the childbirth guru and a former NCT adviser, said yesterday that that would be sad.

"If the NCT cracked up, there's no other organisation that could take its place."

The rebels claim the risk is significant.

A survey by two trust tutors found up to three-quarters of breast-feeding counsellors who represent the NCT on outside bodies felt compromised by the Sainsbury's deal.

They believed it breaches World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines.

Up to half the counsellors and tutors said they would resign if the issue was not resolved. The row is also causing anx-



Breast is best: The NCT is in uproar over sponsorship by a seller of infant formula. Photograph: Alan Richardson/DPA

ety in the branches. One west independent in January and others are reportedly in difficulty.

Ros Barber, chair of the

Uckfield branch, in Sussex, said two neighbouring branches had folded into theirs.

Committee members were so disillusioned they did not want

to do the work. "I don't think you can make a big decision... without consulting the members," she said.

"I passionately support what the NCT does but if they don't sort it out, I'm out."

Mary Broadfoot, a breast-feeding tutor who trains the voluntary counsellors, said it would be difficult to attract counsellors back if they left.

"We will have parents looking for this service and it just won't be there."

She said accepting sponsorship from Sainsbury's could be seen as endorsing its own-brand infant formula. "They have a stake in breast-feeding failure."

Kim Margey, chair of the Glasgow branch, lamented the lack of consultation and the loss of independence.

"Independent advice is one of the things we value. I would be extremely upset if I left, but the principles have got to be stood by," Mary Barnard, the NCT chair, said they regretted the meeting had been called - at a possible cost of up to £40,000 - instead of trying to resolve the matters through the consultation procedure the trust has set up.

"We would have preferred to let the consultation take its course," she said. They had believed the Sainsbury's deal was acceptable under WHO guidelines.

She added that membership had not been increasing for several years, and the trustees had to balance the £3.5m a year budget. "It would be sad if the breast-feeding counsellors left,

but this is not a single-issue body. We want to be able to offer a range of services to a huge range of people." A Sainsbury's spokeswoman said they did not promote infant formula, even though they stocked it.

Mrs Kitzinger said she opposed sponsorship from manufacturers, but supermarkets stocked a range of products and there seemed room for debate.

The essential point was there should be democratic consultation. "It does seem to me that they have neglected to develop ways of communicating between members."

"There's always been conflict bubbling in the NCT. In some ways, it's the sign of a healthy organisation. But if you have too many bubbles you run into trouble. You may explode."

The strange spring continues, with rain back and even snow, as skin cancer fears provoke a price war

## Icy interlude puts paid to spring frolics

Kathy Marks

Last Friday was the hottest day of the year, with temperatures up to 26C. This morning, a dusting of snow is expected in central and southern England. Such are the vagaries of spring-time in Britain.

The culprit is a cold front that moved in from the Arctic yesterday, sweeping away the warm weather in which the country had basked for several days. Strong winds and heavy rain made it one of the worst May Bank Holidays on record.

As the rain moved south, snow was forecast to fall overnight, settling on high ground in the Cotswolds, Chilterns and South Downs. The Peak District and Welsh mountains were also expected to get a couple of inches. It was predicted to melt by midday as temperatures rose.

Snowflakes were expected even in central London, although they were unlikely to settle. If the forecasters are proved right, it will be only the fourth time this century that snow has fallen on the capital in May. The previous occasions were in 1963, 1955 and 1917.

Yesterday was miserable in northern England and Wales, with heavy rain and temperatures well below seasonal norms. Manchester was only 7C in mid-afternoon, compared to a usual average of 14C. Scotland had showers and strong winds.

AA Roadwatch appealed to drivers returning home last night after the Bank Holiday

weekend to exercise caution as conditions on the roads deteriorated.

Rain and strong crosswinds made driving particularly hazardous in Yorkshire and Gwynedd.

One benefit of the weather was that the roads were not expected to be particularly congested, with many people having chosen to spend their day off indoors.

For those who ventured further afield, the latest action by striking French lorry drivers spelt possible disruption to cross-Channel ferry services. The drivers set up rolling "escargot" blockades, slowing traffic to a snail's pace on roads around Boulogne, Dunkirk and Amiens.

They allowed tourist traffic through in one lane, but blocked lorries and other commercial vehicles.

The AA said it was difficult to give advice to British motorists, since the blockades were often lifted after a few hours and set up again elsewhere.

The ferry companies were hopeful that ports would not be affected.

The day of action by local factions within the lorry drivers' unions coincided with a national strike by French bus drivers.

Today is expected to be cold in most parts of the country, with easterly winds, wintery showers and some hail or sleet. In central London, rain will be mixed with the odd snowflake. Ground frosts this morning could kill off tender young plants.



Temperature inversion: Cold discomfort yesterday in Whitley Bay, near Newcastle

Photograph: Will Walker/NN

## Co-op starts sun-cream price war

Matthew Brace

Supermarkets could be on the brink of a sun lotion price war after the Co-op announced it was almost halving its prices of the leading brands to help reduce the incidence of skin cancer.

The move follows research by the Co-op, which found that three people in four still do not realise sunshine can cause skin cancer, and one in three are unaware that sun lotions can reduce that risk.

Cost is also thought to deter people from using sun-creams, some of which sell for twice the price of champagne when measured by volume.

The Co-op, Britain's highest retailer, will sell some leading brands at cost price throughout the summer. Typically, a 200ml bottle of Ambre Solaire's Factor 15 High Protection Milk will be reduced from the recommended retail price of £9.29 to £5.43, and a similar-sized bottle of Factor 25 Piz Buin Lotion will come down from £11.49 to £5.97.

A Co-op spokesman, Ged Carter, said Britons were still failing to get the message that sunbathing was dangerous and should only be done with the protection of a good sun-cream.

The survey of 2,001 adults commissioned by the Co-op found that Britons each waste an average of one day on holiday each year because of sunburn.

"It's unfortunate that the burning ambition most Britons display on holiday costs them both pain and money in wasted holiday time," said Mr Carter.

"Worse still is ignorance about the fact that sun rays on skin cancer can cause health problems in the long term."

The move has prompted at least two rival supermarket chains, which sell the lotions at or around the recommended retail price, to warn they could consider cutting their own prices.

Tesco's corporate affairs manager Martin Venning said: "Clearly we will monitor the situation and may make a decision in the future."

He added that Tesco marketed its own brand of lotions called Sun Essentials, which were substantially cheaper than designer brands, costing £4.99 for 200ml bottles.

A Boots spokesman warned: "We would obviously consider the marketplace when setting retail prices."

However, Asda stressed it would not be cutting its prices, pointing out that it already offered its own brand Sun System lotions at £4.99 for a 200ml bottle.

Asda spokeswoman Charlie

Hobson said: "Our customers already have a choice. They can buy Ambre Solaire or they can buy our own brand which has all the same features and is cheaper."

## Boys feared dead after body is found

Matthew Brace

A large search involving police, coastguards and civilians was under way last night for two boys who went missing in marshes on the Lincolnshire coast.

The body of their friend, Christopher Scott, aged 11, who was with them when they left for a bicycle ride on Sunday, was found on the marshes near Mablethorpe yesterday morning.

The two boys - 11-year-old Nathan Sayer and Ian Sneye, who was 10 on Sunday - have not been seen since Sunday lunchtime when they left for a bike ride to celebrate Ian's birthday.

The last sighting of them was at Horse Shoe Point on the coast, just a few miles from their homes in North Coates, by a man who saw the figures of three children in the distance at around 1pm.

The alarm was raised on

Sunday afternoon by the boys' families and police were called after their bikes were discovered abandoned at Horse Shoe Point.

The area is known for high tides which can sweep in perilously fast and it is feared the boys were cut off.

Hundreds of people yesterday joined police and coastguards in their search for the two missing boys. The search was called off during the afternoon while the tide came in

again, and resumed at 6pm. The in-shore lifeboat and helicopter crews from RAF Leconfield were keeping watch.

A coastguard spokesman said Sunday's tide, which measured 8 metres, was high. It usually varies between 6.2 metres and 8.8 metres. "It is a very dangerous area to be in when the tide is coming in," said the spokesman.

Parts of the marshes have posts driven into them with stages for stranded walkers to

take refuge on. Coastguards and locals know that the area around the mouth of the Humber is hazardous.

When the tide is out, it is possible to walk two miles out on the sand but the danger is that the flood tide comes in very quickly, faster than walking speed.

Someone caught unawares on the sand can be cut off as the water surrounds them. The other hazard is falling into deep gullies running along the sand,

which fill up when the tide comes in.

Keith Vardy, district controller of Humber Coastguard, said people in the area knew the fast flood tide made the coast dangerous. "The possibilities are that they could have been playing on the sand and were cut off by the tide coming in behind them or they may well have slipped into one of the gullies."

"We have not given up hope for them. The search will continue all day."

### DAILY POEM

#### 'A slumber did my spirit seal'

By William Wordsworth

A slumber did my spirit seal;  
I had no human fears:  
She seemed a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;  
She neither hears nor sees;  
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course  
With rocks and stones and trees.

One of Wordsworth's mysterious "Lucy" poems, this epitaph was written in 1798 or 1799 and published in 1800. It appears in the new Oxford World's Classics edition of Wordsworth's *Selected Poetry* (OUP, £3.99), edited with an introduction and notes by Stephen Gill and Duocan Wu.

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but this is not a body. We want to be a range of services for a range of people. A spokeswoman said they promote informants though they stood Mrs Kitzinger and posed sponsorship for bankers, but they stood a range of people there seemed room for The essential point should be democratic. "It does seem to them they have neglected ways of communicating between members. There's always been bubbling in the NCTA ways, it's the sign of a organisation. But if you many bubbles you're trouble. You may not

a price war  
start  
cream  
war

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# blair's britain

## Labour's man for EU seeks new start

Sarah Helm  
Brussels

Britain will seek a fresh start in Europe and draw a line under the past, Doug Henderson, the new minister in charge of relations with the European Union said on his first official visit to Brussels yesterday.

Mr Henderson began the monumental task of turning years of bitter confrontation into lasting partnership. In terms not heard from a British minister in Brussels for many years, he said: "We want to work with you as colleagues in a shared enterprise. Not using the language of opponents. Europe, for the new British government, is an opportunity not a threat."

The minister, a marathon runner and Newcastle MP with no known previous experience of European relations, confirmed that the Labour government would sign up to the Social Chapter, thereby removing the most significant source of bitterness in British-EU relations.

"My government will end the United Kingdom's opt-out from the Social Agreement. We believe that the Social Agreement in its current form represents a sensible balance between social responsibility and economic efficiency."

Mr Henderson told Britain's partners that the Labour government would "talk tough" in representing British interests, but wanted a "fresh start" and hoped to "draw a line under the recent past".

Before taking his seat at the negotiations of an Amsterdam treaty - one of the toughest dealing tables in Brussels - Mr Henderson had undergone Foreign Office briefings on every aspect of EU affairs.

After a warm welcome from Michiel Patijn, the Dutch pres-

ident of the group, Mr Henderson set out his opening statement identifying his government's priorities.

Reaching a deal by the Amsterdam summit in June would be a "top priority" he insisted, to the relief of his European counterparts after 18 months of stalled talks with his predecessors.

The Social Chapter contains only two directives: one giving all working parents a right to three months' unpaid leave after the birth of a child; and the creation of works councils in multi-national firms.

Although it was confirmed in Brussels yesterday that the European Commission would like to extend worker consultation to national firms, the view that there was no great "raft of legislation" on the way was challenged by Graham Mather, Conservative Member of the European Parliament for Hampshire North and Oxford.

He said a "floodgate" of new legislation was about to be opened up. "The Labour government's decision to sign the Social Chapter will mean that there are likely to be six new pieces of labour legislation coming down the pipeline from Brussels in the Government's first year of office."

"The most far-reaching measure will be a law requiring all companies with more than 50 employees to set up works councils, which would have rights to be consulted on business decisions and new company strategies."

In Britain, Mr Henderson's actions provoked Tory outrage.

Stephen Dorrell, the former Secretary of State for Health, said: "They [Labour] have been in office less than a week but they are already adding costs to British business, undermining British competitiveness and undermining the authority of Parliament."



Hand of friendship: Doug Henderson (right), Minister for Europe, greeting Dutch foreign minister Michiel Patijn in Brussels yesterday. Photograph: AP

## Brussels welcomes UK in from cold

Sarah Helm  
Brussels

"Britain has come in from the cold," was the view expressed by Britain's partners in Brussels yesterday after their first round of talks on European reform with the new government.

The comments displayed the goodwill being shown to the new Labour government, and the determination of other governments to ease Tony Blair's path to a deal at the Amsterdam summit in June.

The Europeans were pleased also by signs of a shift in the negotiating position on European reform displayed by the Government four days after its election victory. They were viewed as significant after 18 months of stalling by the Con-

servative government. Doug Henderson, the new Minister for Europe, spoke about the desire to "co-operate" with Europe in a tone rarely heard in Brussels in recent years.

As most EU leaders concede, Britain did not need to make a major lurch towards integration in order to come closer into line with Europe. Few member states have an appetite for federalism and most would be content with moderate reforms at Amsterdam. In France, where a rise in Euro-scepticism has been seen during the election campaign, there was particular satisfaction at Britain's new platform on Europe.

Mr Henderson won over other member states by making good Labour's manifesto pledge to sign up to the Social

Chapter, signalling an end to the five-year "opt out" secured by John Major at Maastricht.

Mr Henderson, speaking in the Council of Ministers' building at a meeting of the Inter-Governmental Conference on European Reform, confirmed Labour would support an employment chapter in the new Amsterdam Treaty.

He indicated other areas where the Government would make compromises, which the Conservatives rejected, to overhaul EU institutions in readiness for enlargement. Among the Government's priorities in Europe, he said, would be completion of the single market, enlargement to the East, reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, and unemployment.

Areas of possible compro-

mise in the Amsterdam treaty talks included:

- \* Probable agreement to a limited extension of qualified majority voting in such areas as regional aid decision-making, industry and the environment.

- \* More powers for the European Parliament over policies which the Council of Ministers decides by qualified majority.

- \* Readiness to consider the introduction of multi-speed or "flexible" decision-making in areas such as foreign policy, justice and home affairs.

- \* Readiness to consider compromise on asylum and immigration control. While Britain would retain frontier checks, it might consider greater integration of policies.

Despite the cordial atmosphere, yesterday's discussions

threw light on the minefield which the Government has to negotiate as it attempts to justify its signature of the Social Chapter to doubters at home.

In June, social policy ministers are expected to accept plans to make it easier for victims of sexual discrimination in the workplace to prove their case against employers. Measures to curb sexual harassment are also being prepared.

But a confrontation appears to be looming between the European Commission and the new Government over whether a manifesto pledge to reduce VAT on fuel can be allowed under an EU directive.

The EU is starting moves to harmonise taxes and is pressing member states to adopt common standards on VAT.

## Super unions flex their muscles

Barrie Clement  
Labour Editor

Employers were warned yesterday of the potential power of new European super-unions which could be developed in the wake of Britain's signature to the Social Chapter.

At the first union conference since the general election, workers' leaders from Britain and the Continent declared the new Euro-unions would be able to raise employees' living standards throughout Europe.

Ken Jackson, general secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, said working hours would be at the top of the agenda.

Speaking at his union's annual conference in Jersey, he said the AEEU and the IG Metall, the biggest union in Europe, were forging closer links and intended to address the gap in working time between Britain and Germany, where IG Metall is based. British engineering workers are on a 37-39 hour week while their German colleagues work 35 hours.

Mr Jackson said he was keen to ensure co-operation over measures to enhance job security. Employers in Britain will be concerned that wages could be next on the agenda; German engineering workers earn about 15 per cent more than their UK counterparts.

Strong links between the AEEU and IG Metall would give members a "hell of a powerful voice," Mr Jackson said.

He predicted that in 10 to 20 years most unions in Europe would be linked by tight federal structures and there would be several "pan-European" unions.

Addressing the conference, Hans Fieger, general secretary of the 8-million-member European Metalworkers Federation, invoked the recent dispute at Renault as a model for future co-operation.

After the company threatened to close a plant in Belgium, unrest spread to France, Spain and the Netherlands. It was the first Euro-strike. "We are tied together and we can do it together," he said.

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مكتبة من الرصيد

The Labour leader's victory has won him fans and imitators across Europe - in rival parties

# Gallic leaders fight over right to be Blair

John Lichfield  
Paris

Can you win the French lottery with a used British ticket?

As the French election campaign formally got under way yesterday, the principal topic of debate was the British election.

Both of the main French political families, the left and the centre-right, are claiming that they have chosen the 'same' political numbers as Tony Blair: the free market with a kinder, gentler face.

The French Socialist leader, Lionel Jospin, was also drawing comfort from new polls which suggest a substantial reduction in the early lead of the centre-right coalition now in government.

On present indications, the French parliamentary election, to be fought over two rounds on 25 May and 1 June, is too close to call.

Before the British election, Mr Jospin was being teased by his opponents for not being Mr Blair. There had been no cultural revolution for French socialists, they said. The party's social and economic proposals, cuts in working hours and make-work schemes for the young, were a throwback to the Seventies.

The immensity of Mr Blair's win has, however, sown doubt in the mind of the centre-right, as if left-wing election victories were, after all, a kind of rabies which might enter France through the Channel Tunnel.

Olivier Dassault, of the aircraft-making family and the Gaullist RPR party, said yesterday that all parallels were misleading. Britain was rejecting 15 years of Thatcherism; France was still recovering from 14 years of Mitterrandism.

Mr Jospin, who had formerly played down the comparisons, now claims to be the most "Blairist" candidate in the race. Like Blair, he says, he wants to increase education and health spending; like Blair, he is cautious about the single currency; like Blair he wants to adapt to global challenges without rejecting the European social and welfare model.

Ruhbush, say the centre-right, we are the real Blairists. Alain Madelin, a right-wing former minister, says he can see nothing in the Blair programme that he would not happily adopt.

The Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, says "Blairisme" is fine because, unlike Jospinisme, it has "completely abandoned socialism".

The British election may have captivated the French politicians, but it is far from clear that Tony Blair - or anything else - has fired the imagination of the French electorate. According to one poll, more than 50 per cent of voters have little interest in the campaign.

To try to explode the lethargic mood, the centre-right is to wheel out its secret weapon sooner than expected. President Jacques Chirac will probably give a television address, or an interview, tomorrow - the second anniversary of his election to a seven-year term as president. He is expected to complain that a

Mr Jackson said he was not sure co-operation on measures to enhance jobs was a priority. Employers in Britain are concerned that wages are too high, on the agenda. Some employers are worried that wages are too high, on the agenda. Some employers are worried that wages are too high, on the agenda.

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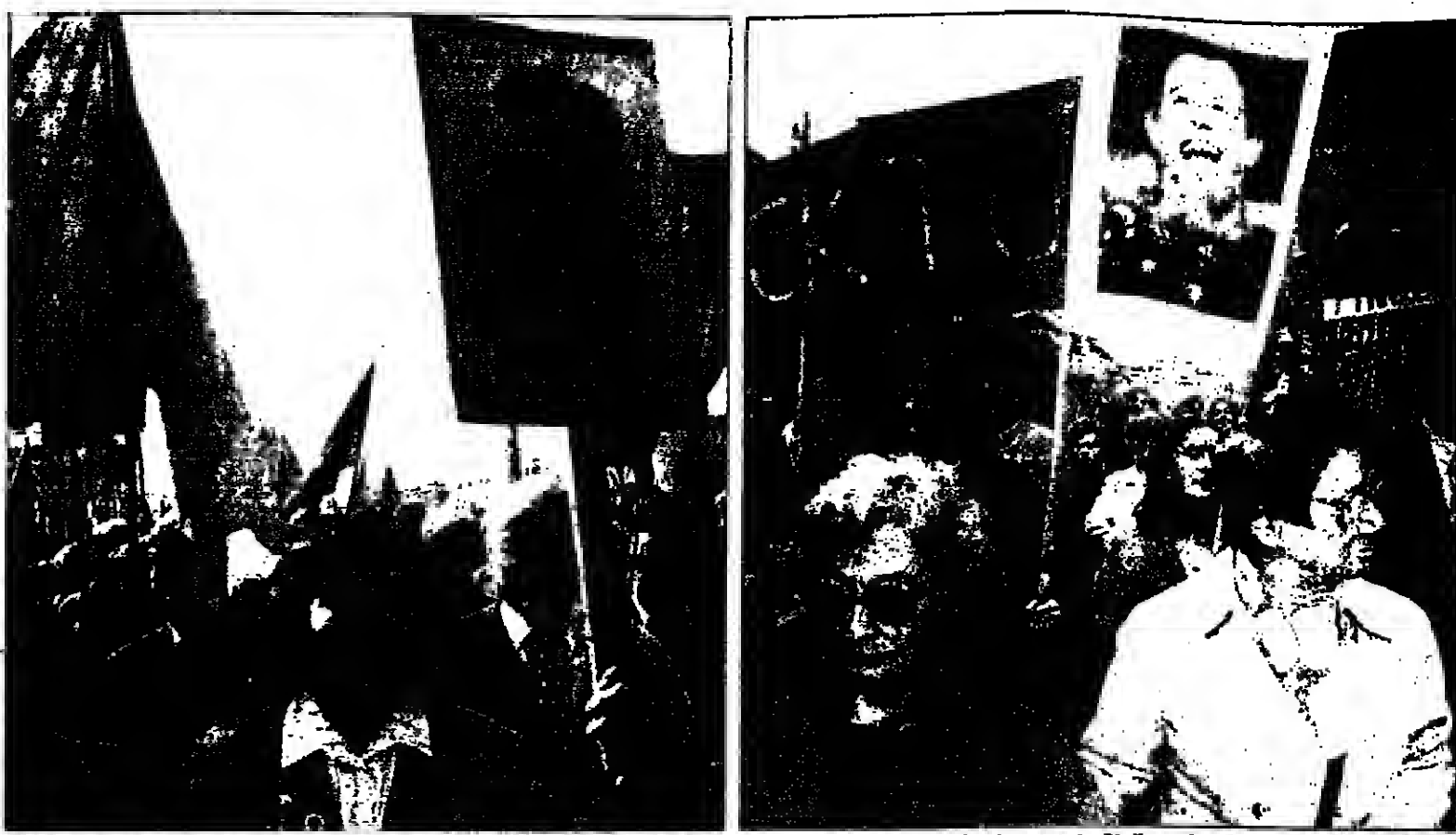
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Signs of the times: The May Day parade in Moscow (left) included about 25,000 Communists, some paying homage to Stalin and calling for the resignation of President Yeltsin. In Warsaw, meanwhile, supporters of Poland's ruling Social Democratic party (right) have found a new hero in Tony Blair. Photographs: Reuters

## German party looks for Tony clone as leader

Imre Karacs  
Bonn

Casting an envious glance towards Britain, Germany's largest opposition party sought to re-invent itself yesterday as the force of the future, but remained mired in arguments of the past.

The Social Democrats, faced with a fifth term in opposition if they lose against Helmut Kohl next year, seem ready to try just about anything that might catapult them to power. To the last man and woman, they are now awowedly Blairite.

All that separates them from victory in 73 weeks' time - as their posters promise - is the discovery of Labour's winning recipe and the anointment of Tony Blair's German clone.

Both remain elusive, however, and the obvious shortcomings have sparked internal feuds. Yesterday, the party at-

ing of any potential candidate for Chancellor. Unfortunately, his popularity is found mainly outside the party. Within the SPD, he is seen as a one-man band, and is universally loathed.

Mr Schröder is not yet the official candidate to take on Chancellor Kohl in elections due in the autumn of 1998. Until last week, the Social Democrats were not planning to pick their champion before next spring. In March, Mr Schröder has to fight an election in the Land of Lower Saxony, where he is Prime Minister. He has vowed not to stand for national office unless he gets a good result at home.

For once, circumstances are working in his favour, but he may not be given the time he needs to put his own affairs in order. Mr Blair's stunning victory has turned perceptions upside down overnight, sparking a furious row about the wisdom of waiting for a Messiah who would have only six months to turn the lumbering party machinery around.

"The right moment for the naming of the SPD chancellor candidate could be earlier than spring 1998," said Heide Simonis, the Prime Minister of Schleswig-Holstein, tipped long ago as potentially the first female Chancellor. Ms Simonis, a left-winger aged 54, could be angling for the job herself, or might just be trying to thwart Mr Schröder.

Either way, Oskar Lafontaine, the party's nominal leader, has been cast in the debate - since rejoined by other party grandees - as the clapped-out incumbent, a blast from the past.

Mr Lafontaine, also aged 53, fought and heavily lost against Mr Kohl in 1990. Since returning to the top party post nearly two years ago, he has brought the SPD to a respectable poll rating, but has failed truly to capture the voters' imagination.

He is patently incapable of generating the excitement for which Germany's left craves, yet the decision to pick Mr Kohl's adversary rests in his hands. But even if there is a German Blair ready to supplant him, the parallels with Britain end there. Germany's opposition is cursed by a reasonably competent government. Or as Mr Schröder himself cooed: "Helmut Kohl is no John Major."



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## blair's britain

Old Labour: Nostalgia for post-war era flows at rally in Bevan's heartland  
'S' word strikes a chord on May Day in Wales

Tony Heath

"I'm not New Labour, I'm not Old Labour, I'm a Socialist." Labour's embrace of the values that put Tony Blair into Number 10 with an undreamt-of majority may have been at the back of Llew Smith's mind when the traditional May Day rally in the Blaenau Gwent kicked off yesterday.

Mr Smith, the local MP, has no hesitation in using the "S" word. It was repeated frequently at the rally in a cinema at Brynmawr, a South Wales Valleys town that personifies the radicalism of Aneurin Bevan, the MP for 31 years until his death in 1960. After Bevan came Michael Foot who handed the baton on to Mr Smith in 1992.

The beliefs of older radicals were articulated, carefully and with a sense of wonder, at Thursday's victory by Dennis Skinner who joined Mr Smith and Audrey Wise MP for the celebrations.

Standing in front of a huge banner emblazoned "Blaenau Gwent Constituency Labour Party. Forward with Socialism," Mr Skinner reminded the 500 at the gathering that he would no longer sit in the Commons just below Paddy Ashdown.

"The Liberals will be in opposition and I'll be sitting on the Government side, where Ted Heath used to sit," he said.

There was a round of applause when the MP for Bolton joked: "We won despite the Dimbleby brothers. The election wasn't about millionaires in TV studios talking to media pundits. It was about people like you."

Nostalgia comes easily in



Radical touch: Dennis Skinner at the May Day celebrations in Brynmawr, Wales

Photograph: Huw Evans

places where memories are long and values are handed down from generation to generation, just as the jobs were before the coalmines were closed.

Evoking the experience of the Labour government which swept to power in 1945, Mr Skinner told a tale: "There was a man called Stafford Cripps who had control of the money just like Gordon Brown has,

though Gordon doesn't look like Stafford. Nye Bevan said we needed a National Health Service and a Welfare State and the money was found."

Now Labour was back with a majority even more decisive than that of Clement Attlee, a start should be made on redistributing power and wealth.

There would, Mr Skinner conceded, be a honeymoon:

"We're on different territory now. The Tories have been vanquished and I don't want to be accused of stirring up protest."

But, he declared, the revenue from North Sea oil should be earmarked for the NHS.

Another source of income was "VAT on private schools, although I don't know if that would go down well with everyone in the leadership, although

it could fetch about £1bn."

The speakers returned again and again to the philosophy of the Bevan era. The Campaign Group, to which the three MPs belong, clearly takes its inspiration from the post-war phenomenon.

Mrs Wise, fresh from May Day celebrations at the weekend in her Preston constituency, said: "It is important for a

Labour government to make a start on righting the wrongs of the past 18 years. It can't be done overnight and Tony Blair hasn't got seven-league boots, but we must show clearly that we are moving in the right - sorry, I mean correct - direction." Songsheets were handed out before the meeting began but when the audience stood to sing the Red Flag, few needed them.

## Greeks furious with Smith over decision to keep Marbles in UK

Louise Jury and Andrew Gumbel

The Greek government will not abandon its aim of restoring the Elgin Marbles to Athens in spite of Labour's opposition.

So convinced were the Greeks that New Labour would despatch the marbles back to the Acropolis that Evangelos Venizelos, the Greek culture minister, wrote a letter asking for them within hours of Tony Blair's landslide victory.

Their hopes were soon dashed by Chris Smith, the new National Heritage Secretary, in an interview on BBC's *On the Record*. He said Labour had examined the idea over the

last five years and decided it was neither feasible nor sensible. The marbles were "wonderfully displayed" in the British Museum, where they were an "integral part" of the collections.

But yesterday, Mr Venizelos indicated that Athens would not be deterred. He will pursue the question with Mr Smith at a European Union meeting in Luxembourg on 30 June.

"The policy remains. It is something that will have to be discussed," he said.

Pressure to return the 5th century carvings has been exerted for many years.

The frieze and other parts of the Parthenon temple in Athens were taken by Lord Elgin in

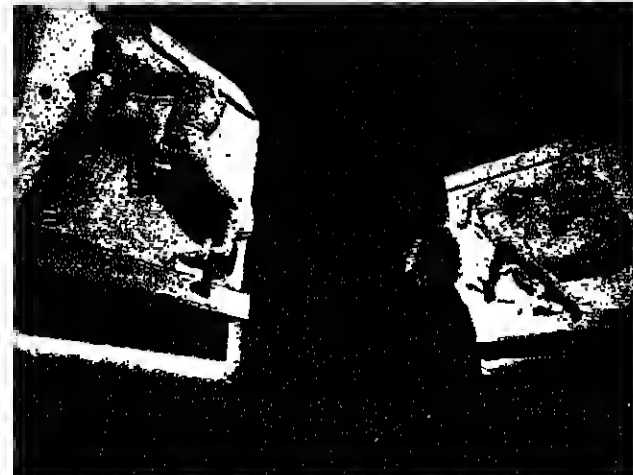
1803, with the permission of the local Ottoman Turkish administrators, and were sold to the British Museum.

Mr Smith said millions of visitors from around the world came every year to see them and it would make no sense to split up the museum's collection.

"If you start embarking on questioning where particular works are located around the world then you get into all sorts of difficult areas of discussion," he said.

The commentators on Radio Athens were unimpressed. "Is this what the British Labourites mean by a more democratic and pro-European policy?" they asked. "They are no different from the Tories. The British will never change or abandon their imperial delusions."

Dr Nicos Papadakis, the press counsel for the Greek embassy in London, was more tactful. He said the issue was



The Elgin Marbles on display

Photograph: Jon Lister

very difficult and delicate for both sides: "This is a fundamental pillar of our foreign policy. There has been a long-standing application for their return. Would you give up?"

Yet, there was a private suspicion in Greece that the issue had been raised too quickly and without due diplomatic protocol. "A rather tactless manoeuvre," said one British official.

The late Greek actress and culture minister, Melina Mercouri, spearheaded the campaign 15 years ago and was believed to have won the Labour Party's sympathy.

In 1984, several British actresses, including Dame Judi Dench, signed a petition of support. And in a telephone poll in 1995, following a Channel 4 film, 92,500 of the 100,000 callers backed the marbles' return.

They are not the only treasures in dispute, however. Other countries also have claims on gems stored in Britain.

Nigeria would like the Benin bronzes in the British Museum and Ghana has staked a claim to 19th-century royal regalia of the Ashanti people, held at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

But it was recently reported that Egypt has dropped its demand for the return of treasures including the Rosetta Stone.

## Bruton is first to call at No 10

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

John Bruton, the Irish Prime Minister, will be the first leader to meet Tony Blair at Downing Street since his election as Prime Minister. Their meeting on Thursday will take stock of the British elections and the chances for resuming the search for peace in Northern Ireland.

The meeting at Downing Street is not being billed as a full summit, but as a "courtesy call" by the Irish premier, who is to address the Oxford Union to-

morrow. He will be accompanied by Dick Spring, Foreign Minister, and the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, also will be at Number Ten.

The talks will cover the election of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin in the Province, but both sides will reaffirm their stand that there can be no entry to the peace talks for Sinn Féin until the IRA declare a full and permanent peace. The meeting will review prospects for the revived peace talks in Northern Ireland, due to begin again on 3 June, but

there are also local elections in Northern Ireland on 22 May, in which Sinn Féin is expected to make a strong showing.

Mr Bruton said last night: "I am very much looking forward to it [the meeting with Mr Blair], as I believe we can develop many new possibilities for co-operation in regard to Northern Ireland, bilaterally and within Europe." Work within each of these areas is mutually reinforcing.

Mr Bruton added: "Co-operation in relation to Northern Ireland should, I believe, have

the utmost priority for both governments." He welcomed a statement by Ms Mowlam stressing that "future arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland should attract the support of all parts of the community."

Mr Bruton described that assertion as "an important recognition of the need for nationalist as well as unionist consent." It emphasises the central task of the talks process, which we commenced on June 10 last year, and which resumes of June 3.



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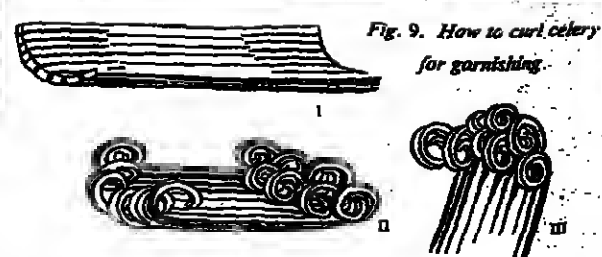


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New Labour, new faces: Surprise names in government as unexpected MPs come to terms with victory

## Banks job shows Blair is a sport

Anthony Bevis  
Political Editor

Tony Blair last night added a dose of cheek and wit to his new Government team last night, with the appointment of Tony Banks as Minister of Sport.

Mr Banks, 54, is one of Parliament's greatest wits and his appointment added colour to a long list of diehard Blair supporters.

MP for Newham North East since 1983, Mr Banks had a year on Labour's front bench in 1992-3 as spokesman on transport and environment.

Mr Banks, a Chelsea supporter, is a tough defender of animal rights and can be expected to play a leading role in Government efforts to ban fox-hunting, on which the Labour manifesto promised a free vote in Parliament.

The greasy pole of political advancement and decline was well worn last night as Mr Blair kept a careful balance between old and new Labour, the different parts of the country and the essential gender balance in a party that now has more than 100 women MPs.

But there were still some bastions of male domination.

Donald Dewar's Scottish Office now has two Ministers of State, Henry McLeish and Brian Wilson, and Malcolm Chisholm as a Parliamentary Under-Secretary, but no women ministers.

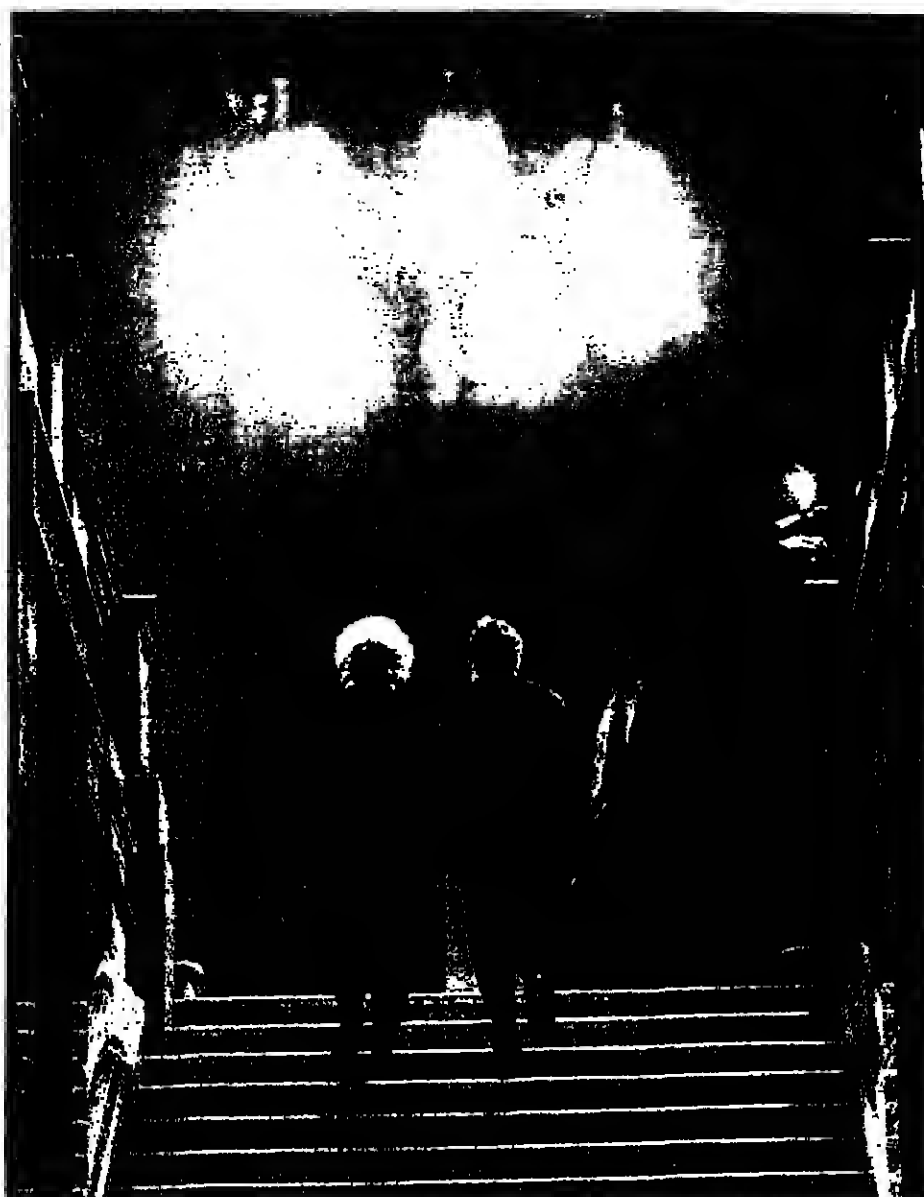
A better precedent was set by Robin Cook, the new Foreign Secretary, with the appointment of Baroness Symonds, the former head of the First Division Association, the civil service union, as a minister with special responsibility for equal opportunities.

With education a key priority of the new Government, Downing Street disclosed that several rising stars of new Labour had got their reward.

Stephen Byers is appointed Minister of State for Education, with special responsibility for school standards. Baroness Blackstone is Education Minister of State in charge of further and higher education.

Tessa Jowell, another close ally of the Prime Minister, is made Minister of State at the Department of Health, a job she shadowed.

Alan Milburn, who was shadow Treasury economic secretary, joins Ms Jowell at the Department of Health, also at the rank of Minister of State.



Helen Liddell and Dawn Primarolo climb the Treasury steps Photograph: Edward Sykes

Alun Michael is made Minister of State in Jack Straw's department. He is joined by Joyce Quin, Robin Cook's former deputy, who was tipped for the European Minister's job.

That post has gone to Doug Henderson, who has been made Minister of State at the Foreign Office. Joining him are Derek Fatchett, a frontbencher for nearly 10 years, and Tony Lloyd, who was also on the Foreign Office team.

Working for Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, are Adam Ingram, Labour's science spokesman in opposition and Paul Murphy, formerly a defence spokesman. Both appointments are at Minister of State level.

Dr John Reid is made up to Defence Minister of State, the job he shadowed in Opposition.

At the Department of Trade and Industry, Margaret Beckett's Ministers of State are Ian McCartney and John Battle.

For Environment and Transport, working under Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott are Dick Caborn and Hilary Armstrong, as Ministers of State. Dawn Primarolo is given the job of Financial Secretary, the post she shadowed in opposition. Joining her at the Treasury is Helen Liddell, as Economic Secretary.

## One-term wonders leave their old lives

Michael Streeter

If Labour's employment team registers a small, temporary blip in the unemployment figures this morning they have only last Thursday's landslide to blame.

Many of those new MP's who may have hoped, but never expected, to win will today have to inform their current employers they are leaving, in anticipation of starting their new careers in central London.

All the new members will be exhilarated but their bank managers may be less happy: a number of the new professional breed of Blairite MP's who scraped in thanks to the huge swing will be taking substantial pay cuts and moving to a job which is notoriously insecure.

As one cynic put it yesterday: "These are the one-term wonders who must know they may never make it to Parliament again if the electorate swings back over slightly next time."

Out of the new intake of Labour MP's around 60 were in such "safe" Tory seats that Labour HQ had omitted them from their main target list, and some remain an unknown quantity to party bosses.

At 30, Stephen Twigg, whose heath-taking victory in Enfield Southgate over Michael Portillo has entered political folklore, knows he still has time on his

side. "Even if I lost next time I would still be only 35," he said. Not that defeat is on his mind. "I'm genuinely delighted at winning. It will be a great challenge, trying to turn what has been a Tory seat into a Labour seat."

Mr Twigg, whose main ambition had been to halve Mr Portillo's majority, will now have to give up his post as general secretary to the Fabian Society. "When I applied for the job there was a requirement that no one could get it who was standing for public office."

"I only got the job by persuading them I was standing in a seat where I could not possibly win."

The Blairite MP says he is unusual among the new intake. "My salary will be going up - nearly everyone else's seems to be going down."

Ivan Henderson, the dockworker who took Harwich from the sports minister Ian Sprouat, with a swing of 14 per cent, admitted that some regarded his candidacy more as a "tester" than as one with a chance of winning. Now he is elected he has no intention, he says, of becoming just a "one-term wonder".

He believes that in many seats, including his own, Tory MP's have not put in the effort locally they could have. Hove, in Sussex, conjures up an image of a true-blue town, but its Labour candidate, Ivor

Caplin, will this morning hand in his resignation as quality manager in Legal & General's marketing division after sweeping to victory on the back of a 16.4 per cent swing. Mr Caplin, 38, says he has "no regrets" at giving up such a secure career.

His wife Maureen confesses she is a little "nervous" at him giving up his job for the uncertainties of full-time politics. "I did not expect him to win. I was shocked - and very pleased."

For Dutch-born lecturer Rudi Vis, 56, his unexpected win in the former Thatcher stronghold of Finchley - with a swing of 15 per cent - has left him with a dilemma: when to resign his economics post at the University of East London without harming his students.

Another lecturer, Roger Casale, 34, will have to leave his students after his surprising win in the Tory bastion of Wimbledon - number 177 on Labour's target list - with a swing of more than 17 per cent. He will say goodbye to his students today.

On Thursday the new MP for Croydon Central, Geraint Davies, will resign as leader of Croydon council, after overturning a Tory majority of nearly 15,000. Pleased, but surprised to be the MP, Mr Davies confessed that none of the main parties - including his own - thought Labour was going to win.

### New Labour - new jobs

List of appointments announced on Monday, 5 May:

Tony Banks is to be appointed Minister for Sport. Stephen Byers is appointed Minister of State for Education, with special responsibility for school standards. Baroness Blackstone, a well-known Blairite, gets the job of Education Minister of State in charge of further and higher education. And Tessa Jowell, another close ally of the Prime Minister, is made Minister of State at the Department of Health - a job she shadowed. Northern Ireland Ministers of State are Adam Ingram and Paul Murphy. Health Ministers of State are Tessa Jowell and Alan Milburn. Scottish Office Minister of State is Henry McLeish. Brian Wilson is the new minister for education and industry in Scotland. Defence Minister of State is Dr John Reid. Foreign Office Ministers of State are Derek Fatchett and Tony Lloyd. Home Office Ministers of State are Alun Michael and Joyce Quin. Department of Trade and Industry Ministers of State are John Battle and Ian McCartney. Environment and Transport Ministers of State are Dick Caborn and Hilary Armstrong. Junior Minister at the Lord Chancellor's Department is Geoff Moon. Junior Minister for Wales is Peter Hain. Dawn Primarolo is given the job of Financial Secretary, the post she shadowed. Joining her at the Treasury is Helen Liddell, as Economic Secretary. Nigel Griffiths and Barbara Roche are made Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Trade and Industry. Other Under Secretary posts go to Nick Raynesford, Glenda Jackson and Angela Eagle - aged just 36 - who go to the Environment and Transport under John Prescott. And Keith Bradley and John Denham are given jobs at the Department of Social Security. Sam Galbraith and Malcolm Chisholm have postings at the Scottish Office.

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## blair's britain

## Redwood the Vulcan takes on Tory Boy

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

John Redwood will announce today that he is running for the leadership of the Conservative Party on a pledge to reunite the party on Europe and rebuild the Tories from the grass roots.

Mr Redwood is facing a concerted effort by some Tory grandees to block his campaign, but he will tell the 165 Tory MPs who will select the new leader: "Now is the time for explanation, not recrimination."

There may be a hollow laugh from his critics, but Mr Redwood, who has been consistent in his opposition to a single currency, believes the party will be united in its opposition to a fudged single currency.

However, in spite of his Euro-scepticism, Mr Redwood, known as the Vulcan, will also base his campaign on the need

to rebuild from the grassroots through Tory strength on local councils, highlighting the Tory haul of 19 out of 26 seats on his local Wokingham council. The former Cabinet minister who challenged John Major for the leadership on the slogan "No change, no chance", will be the third to enter the field, after Kenneth Clarke and Peter Lilley.

He has a head-start on the rest, having been out of government since 1995 when he resigned to fight the leadership.

The campaign for the chairmanship of the 1922 Committee of Tory MPs also will get under way today.

Archie Hamilton, a former defence minister, will announce in a letter to all Tory MPs that he is standing for the post, which has to be filled before the leadership contest can begin.

Other contenders for the 1922 chairmanship will include

John MacGregor, a former Cabinet minister, Tom King, and Sir Geoffrey Johnson-Smith.

Alan Clark, the MP for Kensington and Chelsea, has also told his friends he wants to run

**He will base his campaign on the need to rebuild from the grassroots**

for the chairmanship, which will be decided on 21 May.

The former Home Secretary, Michael Howard, is almost certain to mount a strong campaign for the leadership, emerging as one of the last contenders, in order to build a momentum before formally declaring his bid.

Mr Howard is gaining support across the party, from the Euro-sceptic right wing, to some of those on the left of the Tory Party, including Virginia Bottomley, who believe he is a "big hitter" who carries enough au-

thority to challenge Tony Blair. William Hague is also expected to declare his candidacy for the leadership, after taking soundings from among his friends. He is emerging as the front-runner among those who believe they now have to jump a generation to rebuild the party and match Mr Blair's appeal.

At 36, however, some of the grandees in the party who survived the call on 1 May yesterday said Mr Hague was "too young" to take on the task.

Mr Major is expected to take on responsibility for foreign affairs and Europe, following the loss of the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, and will meet senior colleagues, including the party's chief whip, Sir Alastair Goodlad, to map out the strategy for dealing with Mr Blair's first Queen's Speech next Wednesday.

The response to the Queen's speech could be Mr Major's swan song. But those close to him discounted speculation that he may stand down from his Huntingdon constituency to provide a seat for Chris Patten, the Governor of Hong Kong. "He feels it would be insulting to his constituency. He won't do that. He will not back openly any of the candidates to replace him."

## Runners and riders in race to lead party

Michael Howard, 55, ex-home secretary, opponent of Ken Clarke in Cabinet over Europe, but failed to persuade John Major to harden the opposition to the single currency. Strength - right-winger, hard on crime, and tough debater who scored hits on Jack Straw, then his shadow; he is seen as one of the few who could lay a glove on Tony Blair.

Weakness - seen as slick lawyer, who could argue the same case either way. Team - Sir Michael Spicer, leading Euro-sceptic; David Lidington, his parliamentary private secretary; with loyal number two David Maclean. Other Euro-sceptics likely to back him include David Davis, former foreign minister. On centre-left, Virginia Bottomley among his backers.

Kenneth Clarke, 56, ex-chancellor, big hitter who can scare Labour; won praise for handling of the economy, steady growth and low inflation, and resistance

**Colin Brown runs a rule over the hopefuls who have thrown their hats in the ring**

who could play the unity card. Strength - no blame for the defeat attaches to him; youth makes him the only choice for those wanting to jump a generation. Also brave - he made public scandal of child abuse in homes in Wales.

Weakness - too young to cut the mustard. Team - Alan Duncan, former fixer in the Major camp, and Portillo supporter; Nigel Evans, his former PPS; Sir George Young, baronet on the caring left of the party.

John Redwood, 45, with the Conservative 2000 think-tank as a base, ex-Welsh secretary, Euro-sceptic and right-wing populist, former head of Thatcher's Downing Street policy unit.

Strength - proved right on the need to apologise for Black Wednesday, and his opposition in government to tax rises; had the courage of his deep convictions to challenge John Major in 1995; outside the regime which crashed on 1 May.

Weakness - "Vulcan" accused of helping to bring down the Major regime by Euro-scepticism; too brainy to lead the "stupid" party. Team - Ian Duncan-Smith, Julian Brazier, Edward Leigh, Marion Rogers, David Wilshire, with Howard Williams, as political aide.

Stephen Dorrell, 45, former health secretary, with strong centre-left credentials. Strength - youngish, stylish, articulate spokesman, with bright ideas on the health-service reforms.

Weakness - shift to Euro-scepticism lost friends on the left and failed to convince right. Team - David Faber, his former PPS; Peter Luff, and Tim Rycroft, political aide, but could gain more from the Heseltine camp.

Peter Lilley, 53, ex-social security secretary, author of the Pensions Plus plan, which opened Tories to fatal Labour attack in election over alleged abolition of state pension.

Strength - right-winger with brains to go cautiously on welfare reform. Weakness - image too thin to lead Tories back to victory. Team - John Whittingdale, former Thatcher PPS; David Willetts, Bernard Jenkin; Piers Merchant, and could gain more from Euro-sceptic Portillo camp.



Clarke: Blokeish, but taste in footwear is a handicap

to Governor of the Bank. Eddie George's pressure for increases in interest rates. Strength - belief in himself, "blokeish" appeal.

Weakness - Euro-sceptics hate him, and Britain will never elect a leader in Hushpuppy Camp - pro-Europeans, John Gummer, Ian Taylor and Sir Peter Temple-Morris, leader of the Macleod group of "one-nation" Tory MPs.

William Hague, 36, ex-secretary of state for Wales, centre-left with Euro-sceptic cutting edge,

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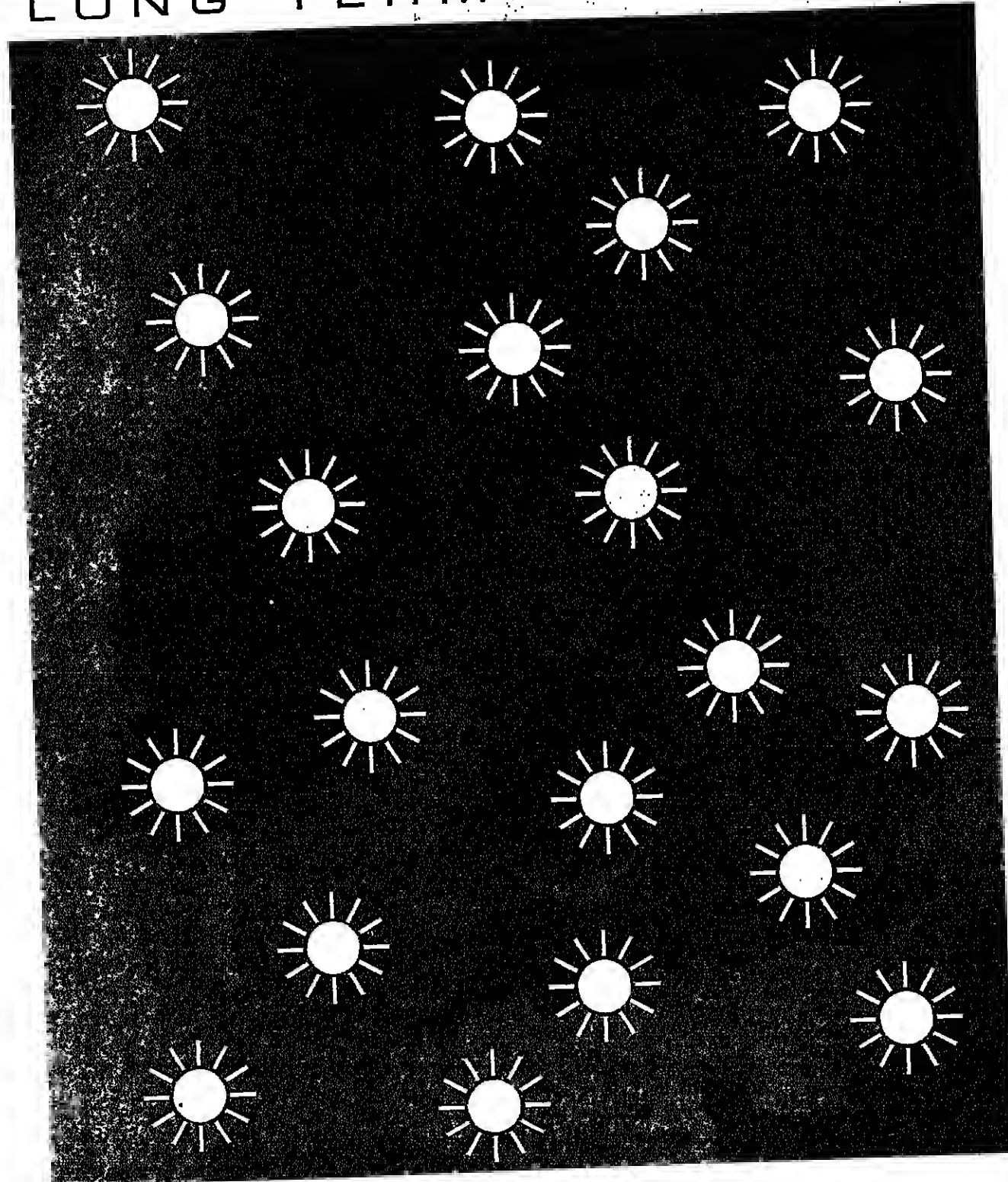
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# Failure of talks puts Kinshasa on rebel alert

Ed O'Loughlin  
Kinshasa

Zairean rebel radio warned citizens of Kinshasa to stay away from "strategic areas", saying the first attack on the government held capital could come at any time.

The warnings follow the inconclusive results of this week-end's peace talks in Congo, which have left rebel leader Laurent Kabila free to go ahead with his threat to capture the capital by force. The advance rebel units are believed to be within 100km of the capital, having moved 300km since capturing the city of Kikwit a week ago. Reports in Kinshasa say that rebel radio is claiming some of Mr Kabila's fighters have already infiltrated the capital in civilian clothes.

Speaking in his southern base of Lubumbashi, Mr Kabila has given President Mobutu Sese Seko three days to resign unconditionally or else "perish with his power".

Mobutu aides yesterday rejected this ultimatum, de-

scribing it as the "words of a hoodlum".

The US ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson, visited Mr Kabila in Lubumbashi yesterday in a last ditch effort to persuade him to pursue his objectives by peaceful means.

The drive on Kinshasa comes despite Sunday's face-to-face meeting between Mr Mobutu and Mr Kabila, which took place aboard the South African naval supply ship *Oceanique* at Pointe-Noire in the Congo. Although Mr Mobutu has agreed in principle to step down as President, thereby fulfilling the rebels' avowed war aim, hopes for an immediate end to the conflict proved groundless when the two men failed to agree on how and when this should happen.

According to a communiqué released after the meeting, Mr Mobutu wants to remain head of state during a transition period leading to elections. Mr Kabila refused to accept anything less than Mr Mobutu's immediate resignation and says his Alliance of Democratic Forces

for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire should manage power during the transition period.

The chairman for the talks, South Africa's President Nelson Mandela, said he plans to bring both sides back together next week for further talks. In the meantime, he made it plain, there was little prospect of a ceasefire - "Ceasefire is not in Mr Kabila's vocabulary," he remarked.

Life went on much as normal in Kinshasa yesterday, despite the growing prospect of a rebel attack. Most Kinshasans now say they would welcome Mr Kabila's rebels to their city. After 32 years of corrupt and incompetent rule the ailing President Mobutu is deeply

unpopular, and few people now fear to say so.

Many observers in the capital believe that, in the absence of a ceasefire, it will fall in the next few days, possibly without a major battle. The rebels have

encountered only light resistance from the government's undisciplined army in their long march from the east, and there is little sign that the army is prepared to put up a real fight now. The government claims to

have launched a counter-offensive, with elements of the elite Presidential Security Detachment (ESD) which it says is holding the rebels along a 60km wide front. No apparent effort has been made to fortify key instal-

lations around the capital, and no curfew has been imposed. Many Zaireans fear that the main threat to their safety comes not from the rebels but from the government army, which has a long tradition of vi-

olence against its own people. Across the Congo river in Brazzaville several thousand troops from the US, France, Britain and Belgium are on standby to evacuate foreign citizens in the event of an attack.

File past: Rwandan refugees queuing to board a plane at Kisangani in Zaire to take them home in an airlift organised by the UN Photograph: AFP



## Mix-up blamed for train deaths

Washington (Reuters) — The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) blamed a breakdown in co-ordination with local authorities for the death of around 100 Rwandan Hutu refugees in a packed train on Sunday.

Sadako Ogata, the High Commissioner, said: "These arrangements did not move with full coordination... the military on the ground and our office were not really co-ordinated because of the difficulty of co-ordination as such."

UN officials in Zaire said the refugees suffocated or were crushed to death in the badly overcrowded train carrying them from a refugee camp to the northeastern town of Kisangani, where they were to be airlifted home to Rwanda.

Ms Ogata said that local authorities had ordered the train to leave Biaro, about 25 miles south of Kisangani, "without HCR clearance" because too many people were already aboard as the train prepared to pull out.

No UNHCR staff were aboard the train, made up of six open-topped cars, she said. "It just went," carrying the

refugees, railway staff, six soldiers, presumably rebels, and a local employee of the UN World Food Programme.

Quoting from a UNHCR report on the tragedy, she said refugees swarmed on board at two stops, where as many as 5,000 to 6,000 people were waiting to board.

Many probably died at the first stop in the course of storming the train, she said. And "the train was made to stop again and others scrambled to get on board."

Survivors said thousands of refugees had swarmed onto the train as it pulled out of a station near Biaro camp. The weak, children and dozens of desperately ill adults aboard were forced to the bottom of the cars in the crush that followed.

The railway is controlled by Zairean rebel authorities, who have either resisted or co-operated reluctantly with the UN effort to airlift the Hutu refugees, who number about 80,000, back to Rwanda.

Ms Ogata said that if a UN effort to begin the airlift last month had gone ahead as planned, the tragedy would not have occurred.

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## international

# Kasparov beaten as Deep Blue draws level

William Hartston

The IBM supercomputer Deep Blue levelled the scores in its match against Garry Kasparov by winning its second game against the world chess champion in 45 moves. Kasparov had won the opening battle of the six-game match on Saturday.

The games are being played on the 35th floor of the Equitable Centre in Manhattan where Kasparov faces a computer terminal across a chess board. Only three of Kasparov's assistants and five members of the Deep Blue programming team are permitted to watch the game directly, but all tickets were sold for the 450-seat first-floor audi-

however, the watch remained on the table.

After three hours, Kasparov looked content with his position, but a few moves later was reduced to apparently aimless shuffling, and the computer gained a grip on the position.

Soon the world champion was shaking his head in frustration and making faces indicative of the disgust he felt at himself for being forced into such a miserable position. Recognising that his game was hopeless, Kasparov resigned at move 45.

Not generally renowned for his equanimity in defeat, the champion did, on this occasion, leave the playing room calmly, but he did not appear for the scheduled press conference.

The play so far has confounded all expectations. Computers have been traditionally regarded as highly dangerous in complex tactical games, but less effective in blocked positions where long-term strategy takes precedence over immediate calculations.

Yet the computer gave a faultlessly subtle strategic performance in winning the second game. Indeed, the way Deep Blue managed to nurture a small positional advantage while stifling any hopes its opponent might have had to counter-attack was reminiscent of some of Anatoly Karpov's best victories over Kasparov in world title matches. "This was a game that any human would have been proud to play," said Joel Benjamin, the chess grandmaster consultant to the IBM team. "This was not computer chess. This was real chess."

Indeed, when Kasparov was reduced halfway through the game to aimless shuffling a bishop to and fro, it was his own play that was made to look more artificial than that of the intelligence facing him.

Kasparov's defeat: page 14, the *Tabloid*

• This was a game that any human would have been proud to play - this was real chess •

torium, where spectators paid \$25 (£16) each to watch huge screens displaying the state of the game and the expressive movements of Kasparov as he wrestled with the machine.

After 17 quick moves of opening theory, with which Kasparov and Deep Blue were both clearly familiar, the human champion removed his watch - always a sign that he is beginning to take things seriously. Indeed, in the first game, the first clear evidence that Deep Blue's chips were cooked came when Kasparov smiled and put his watch back on just minutes before the computer's operators conceded defeat. This time,



Mob rule: A scene from the new screen Mafia drama *Donnie Brasco*, starring Michael Madsen and Johnny Depp (centre left and right)

## After the suicide, a wall of silence

Andrew Gumbel on the lonely terror of a family who defied the gangs

Nisemi — The Papillon fur and jewellery shop is one of the few half-decent buildings standing in the miserable southern Sicilian town of Nisemi. Tucked away down a rutted, nameless side-street, off one of the main roads leading out of town, it offers a welcome splash of colour, and well-scrubbed affluence among the monotonous, dilapidated strings of crumbling houses and shops.

The man who built it, Salvatore Frazzetto, was a property speculator who had dreams of bringing some honest, attractive business to this most depressed corner of the Italian south. But Mr Frazzetto did not count on the sheer hostility of the local Mafia gangs who have successfully strangled all similar attempts at independent private enterprise in the past.

On 16 October last year, two thugs burst into the shop and threatened Mr Frazzetto and his

23-year-old son Mimmo at knife point. When their demands for protection money went unheeded, they cut the two men up before finishing them off with a pistol. Mr Frazzetto's widow, Agata Azzolina, was determined not to cave into the pressure of the mobsters and, for a while, kept the shop going as a gesture of defiance. But she, too, was gradually ground down. On New Year's Eve the thugs returned to the shop and beat her up. She started receiving anonymous letters demanding millions of lire. Her customers deserted her, intimidated not only by the violence she had suffered but by the three soldiers sent by the authorities to stand guard outside. Repeatedly, she and the mayor of Nisemi, Salvatore Liardo, requested a police escort but

were told no resources were available for such a service. Mrs Azzolina's persecutors followed her everywhere, even to the cemetery where they accosted her while she was grieving over the tombs of her loved ones, threatening to kill her remaining child, 21-year-old Chiara, if she did not pay up. By the end of March, Mrs Azzolina could stand it no longer and hanged herself with a piece of nylon cord in her kitchen. "Forgive me, Chiara," she wrote in her suicide note. "Leave this god-forsaken place. I can't take it any longer."

For the moment, Chiara has not left, but she is desperately, terrifyingly, alone. Apart from the mayor, no state official turned up to her mother's funeral. Nisemi's shopkeepers were supposed to close their shutters for a day of mourning but carried on working as normal. The scores of death notices put up around the town at the municipality's expense disappeared in days. It was as if Agata Azzolina had never existed.

Chiara now has the escort that was denied to her mother, but it has only isolated her further from the rest of the town. She has retreated into the cocoon of her remaining family and refuses to speak to anyone. Her 84-year-old grandfather, himself isolated and ignored by his neighbours, said: "I think she'll go soon, maybe not far, but far enough to get out of here. Her life has been shattered and there's certainly no future for her in Nisemi."

Chiara's grandmother sits in a wheelchair behind a first-floor window and stares forlornly down into the street all day long. The terrible story of the Frazzetto family is indicative of

### The new MAFIA

a new strain of Mafia activity in Sicily that has grown up over the past 10 years and is becoming ever more virulent. The extortionists and murderers that prey on Nisemi and the surrounding towns are not part of Cosa Nostra, the classical Sicilian Mafia, with its honour codes and strict family-based hierarchies.

They are a wilder, more volatile and ultimately more frightening phenomenon, known to Mafia experts as *stiddari* — members of a rival organisation to Cosa Nostra named after the Sicilian dialect word for a star, *stidda*, because many of its members are tattooed with star motifs.

The *stiddari* thrive in areas with no longstanding Mafia tradition, taking advantage of eco-

nomie recession to pick up recruits and squeezing all available drops of wealth out of hawks like Nisemi.

They do not operate protection rackets in any systematic way, or have any organised hold on the local state authorities; rather, they pounce on people in unpredictable fashion and generate a climate of fear as and when it suits them.

In Nisemi, gangland killings have taken place in the main square, right under the noses of the town council. Last year, a 19-year-old boy called Pierantonio Sandri disappeared mysteriously and has not been heard of again. Cars are not so much stolen as taken hostage — the owner being plagued by anonymous phone calls until he pays a hushy on his vehicle.

Businessmen complain of frequent attacks on their property and of intimidating phone calls, some of them apparently made by members of the police.

There was a fire in the projection booth of Nisemi's only functioning cinema recently, accompanied by a volley of pistol shots. When the manager got home that night, the front door of his building had been burned down.

The fear is palpable in the averted glances, in the tightly closed shutters, in the suspicion underscoring the overly warm welcome offered to outsiders. In Nisemi's main square, un-

employed young men with large wads of cash in their pockets loiter outside an insalubrious bar. Town council workers turn away from them as soon as they come out of their building, scurrying away down the dusty side streets.

The Mafia never likes to operate under a spotlight, and the blaze of publicity surrounding Agata Azzolina's suicide has made Nisemi close ranks completely. Even Mayor Liardo, who until recently was making all the right noises and has worked hard to improve basic conditions in the town, has started complaining about Nisemi's bad press.

"This is not a Mafia town," he insisted, even while listing his problems with extortion, murder, kidnapping, drugs trafficking and the rest. "We just have a problem with delinquency. People here are honest and hardworking."

The head of the local small business association, Giovanni Militari, admitted on the day of Mrs Azzolina's funeral that he had paid protection money — albeit in kind rather than in cash. Two weeks later, having been summoned by an investigating magistrate to explain himself, he was complaining of having been maliciously misquoted. As for the cinema owner, a Mr Aglietta, he had only one thing to say about his recent misfortunes: "Nothing happened to me. Nothing at all."

This is the fourth in a continuing series on the new mafia.

## Spain basks in economic gains

Elizabeth Nash  
Madrid

One year on, Aznar's government passes key tests on single currency

"The truth is, Spain is doing quite well." Words like these have been heard a lot lately, but it was a surprise, none the less, to hear them the other day from the lips of the opposition Socialist leader, Felipe Gonzalez. The conservative Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar, must be feeling pretty pleased with himself as he celebrates his first year in government.

A couple of recent milestones — a pat on the back from Brussels on Spain's likely inclusion in the first round of monetary union and the signing of a historic labour pact between employers and unions — have boosted ministers' spirits. The Governor of the Bank of Spain, Luis Angel Rojo, even warned Mr Aznar's team not to let the euphoria get out of hand. "More efforts are still needed," he said.

Not everyone is euphoric. Trade union leaders, who have just signed an accord with the employers' organisations that will transform the country's labour market, heard boos and protests from their members during last week's traditional May Day parades. The pact will make it easier for companies to lay people

off; they will have to give 33 days notice for each year worked.

Employers have long complained that entrenched workers' employment rights — a legacy of the Franco years that unions and the previous Socialist government were reluctant to discard — encouraged employers to issue short-term ("junk") contracts rather than take on permanent staff.

The unions hope that junk contracts will be replaced by longer-term or indefinite ones, especially for young people, more than half of whom have never had a proper job, and that the country's 22 per cent unemployment rate, twice the EU average, will fall. But the employers admit they do not know how many new jobs the deal will create.

The pact now goes to parliament, and the Labour Minister, Javier Arenas, who kept out of the way during three months of tough negotiations, promised to pilot the agreement through before the summer, when employment traditionally picks up. Spain's stock market leapt to

historic heights after the European Commission recently predicted that Spain, unlike Italy and Greece, could qualify for monetary union first time round. Huge demand for shares in the privatised state companies Telefonos and the petrol concern Repsol kept markets on the boil. And when the International Monetary Fund predicted an economic growth rate above the EU average, the government's heart fairly burst with pride.

Inflation, at 2.4 per cent, is within the limit required for monetary union, as is the budget deficit. Public debt, at 68 per cent of GNP (slightly above Brussels requirements) is falling, and interest rates and currency fluctuations are on target.

But the ruling Popular Party has yet to win the affection of the public. Opinion polls suggest that most Spaniards remain non-committal about the government's political achievements. The public's main concerns remain unemployment and ETA terrorism: two issues on which little progress has been



Jose Maria Aznar: Much to gain by hanging on

made in the last 12 months. If Spain passes the single currency exam, Mr Aznar may be tempted to go to the country in 1999, a year before he has to, to seek an absolute majority and disengage from the burdensome but necessary alliance with Catalan and Basque nationalists. Mr Gonzalez suggested recently that the government might call elections even sooner, in late 1998 before joining the single currency, if the economy and the polls continue to improve. But Mr Aznar, on a visit to the United States this week, insisted he would run his full term. He still has everything to gain by hanging on.

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# Israel tries to breathe life into peace talks

Eric Silver  
Jerusalem

Israel is preparing a package of gestures designed to revive the peace negotiations with the Palestinians that have been frozen since work began on a contentious Jewish housing project at Har Homa in Arab East Jerusalem two months ago.

The measures are expected to include firm steps to building homes for Arabs in Israel's dis-

puted capital and the restoration of residence rights in Jerusalem to hundreds of Palestinians who forfeited them by moving out of the city.

The Israelis are also considering a more flexible approach on various unfulfilled commitments made by the previous Labour government under the interim agreement. Among these are Palestinian air and sea ports in the Gaza Strip; a safe-

Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank and Gaza; and access for Palestinian workers to jobs in Israel.

The Palestinians remain sceptical, however, about whether the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, can or will deliver. The Bar-On scandal over the dubious appointment of an underqualified lawyer to the post of Attorney-General has left him both weaker and more dependent on

hardliners in his right-wing and religious coalition.

The Interior Ministry, a fiefdom of the Sephardi Shas party, is resisting the Prime Minister's attempt to stop it confiscating Jerusalem identity cards from Arabs who have moved either abroad or to the West Bank suburbs. And Mr Netanyahu himself is defying international pressure to stop building 6,500 Jewish homes on Har Homa.

The Palestinian leader, Yasser

Arafat, complained yesterday that the Israeli government was not interested in salvaging the peace process. Speaking to reporters on his return from talks in Cairo with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, he accused Mr Netanyahu of continuing to violate signed agreements.

Mr Arafat is to meet Israel's figurehead president, Ezer Weizman, on the border between Israel and Gaza this evening, but neither side expects

more than a gentle warming of the atmosphere. In a week of quickening diplomatic activity, Mr Netanyahu will also hold talks today with Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan, though again they are likely to have a marginal impact on the Israeli-Palestinian imbroglio.

In the longer term, Israelis and Palestinians reluctantly acknowledge that their best hopes lie with the United States. Dennis Ross, President Bill Clinton's

Middle East troubleshooter, returns to the region tomorrow. Under the new Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, Washington seems to have resigned itself to a more active role.

It has been pressing Mr Netanyahu to come up with confidence-building measures, and US officials are now expected to take part in all negotiating sessions. Previously, the Clinton administration had preferred to

let the two sides solve their own problems, reserving its intervention for the final, critical stages.

This is clearly no longer enough. David Afek, the disenchanted head of the Israeli Foreign Ministry research department, went so far last week as to pronounce the peace process dead.

It will take all the skill and leverage the Americans can marshal to resurrect it.

## Hong Kong's new ruler speaks in riddles

Stephen Vines  
Interviews the  
man Peking has  
put in charge of  
the colony

Hong Kong — Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's Chief Executive designate, gives new meaning to the word opaque. Confronted with awkward questions, he smiles, pressed to answer, he smiles even more broadly and cheerfully delivers a reply to something which has not been asked.

For weeks he has been battered by criticism over plans to whittle down the colony's civil rights laws and he has ducked and weaved in response to the criticism. Yesterday he chooses to explain his position to two small groups of British and American journalists, the people he has accused of spreading misinformation about Hong Kong. The aim, presumably, was to answer his critics and let the outside world know that, as he put it, the new Hong Kong will have an "equitable, compassionate and democratic society".

He insisted that the changes to the laws will simply bring Hong Kong into line with other countries. The proposed new restrictions on demonstrations, which will make it virtually impossible to call a rally at short notice, are, he says "either the same or less restrictive than elsewhere".

The freedom to demonstrate would be preserved and the new administration had no intention of stifling protest. But, he stresses: "We have to find a balance between the rights of the individual to demonstrate and the order of our society."

Mr Tung has talked a great deal about Chinese values and the pride which Hong Kong should take in putting them into practice. Asked what exactly were these Chinese values he lists: "An emphasis on family, education, respect for old people and an emphasis on quiet consultation rather than confrontation."

Could these values not also be described as being part of the non-Chinese Christian-Judaic tradition, he was asked. As ever Mr Tung smiled, and smiled again, finally saying: "The emphasis is very different". Having lived in Britain he was not prepared to suggest that no one there adhered to these values. "I'm sure in the United



Modest magnate: Tung Chee-hwa says Hong Kong will be 'equitable and democratic'

Photograph: AFP

Kingdom people also work very hard," he conceded.

As the questioning intensified he threw his hands up in the air. "My God," he said, "this is not a press interview, it's a philosophical discussion."

Mr Tung likes to think of himself as a practical man. A former shipping magnate, he is used to commanding a large company without the hindrance of public scrutiny, yet he takes it with good grace, albeit mingled with evident perplexity.

The problem is that he is no longer a chief executive of a big company but the chief executive of a part of China, a country ruled by an authoritarian and centralised government. This

means that Mr Tung must report to his masters in Peking.

His critics say he is doing no more than carrying out their wishes, but he insists that Hong Kong has been promised a high degree of autonomy by China.

### Cook promises same policy

The Foreign Secretary telephoned the Governor of Hong Kong yesterday to reassure him that there would be continuity of policy between the outgoing and incoming governments. Robin Cook repeated his confidence in Chris Patten — a former chairman of the Conservative Party, who was appointed by his friend, the former prime minister John Major.

Mr Cook made clear that Britain's policy on Hong Kong would continue unchanged and that the people of the colony could be sure of Britain's determination to make the transition to Chinese rule a success.

But, who does he actually report to? "I report to the central government," he replies. Yes, but to who in the central government? "A number of people," he says.

Is it true that there is fighting within the Chinese government for control of Hong Kong affairs and that this might make his position difficult? He shrugs. "I don't know how Whitehall works," he says and is told that it consists of a lot of power centres jostling for control. He chuckles appreciatively when it is evident that he is being asked if the same sort of thing is happening in China.

Some people have suggested Mr Tung is a member of China's ruling Communist Party. He shrugs this off. Are any members of his cabinet party members? He finally says no, adding: "If they were I would not be too concerned. I judge a person by their commitment to Hong Kong."

He is so pragmatic that he is even looking forward to better relations with a Labour government, despite having been a donor to the Conservatives' 1992 election fund. "I hope," he says, "that the Labour government will look at the whole issue in a much more macro way. Look at the long-term relations between Hong Kong and Britain and China and Britain."

He believes it is important "to put behind all the argument. Let's sit down and say these things need to be done". Is Mr Tung frustrated that his message is not understood? "Not really frustrated as such," he says, adding modestly: "I'm not skilful enough to present my message."

### significant shorts

#### Tehran accuses British diplomat of spying

A hardline Iranian newspaper accused Britain's top diplomat in Tehran of being a member of MI6. The daily *Kayhan* quoted an unnamed French diplomat as telling its sister weekly in Paris that Jeffrey James, chargé d'affaires at the British embassy in Tehran, belonged to the Secret Intelligence Service. It quoted an unnamed informed source in Tehran as saying Iranian officials were investigating the case and that it was possible Mr James would be expelled.

Reuters — Dubai

#### Radio Australia gagged

The Australian government put Radio Australia's independence into question, saying the overseas station should not interfere in other countries by broadcasting news of their internal affairs — even coups. Liberal Senator Judith Troeth said pro-government senators did not want the radio station to broadcast an alternative voice to any government's view, even if the government had seized power illegally.

AP — Canberra

#### Call to relax ivory trade ban

Delegates to a conference on the African elephant argued against repealing a ban on ivory trade, saying the alternative would be a return to widespread poaching. "If that happens, the African elephant will be in danger of final extinction," Perez Olindo, director of the African Elephant Foundation International said. Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe have made proposals for the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species to consider loosening the ban on ivory trade at its annual conference next month in Zimbabwe. AP — Johannesburg

#### Indonesians defy military

Supporters of a minority Indonesian party held processions in two major cities, ignoring warnings by the military that parades were banned during the general election campaign. The Muslim-oriented United Development Party supporters paraded in the capital Jakarta and in Yogyakarta.

Reuters — Yogyakarta

#### Blair warned on Kashmir

The chief of India's Jammu and Kashmir state urged the new Labour government to ignore Kashmiri separatists' pleas and not meddle in the regional conflict dividing India and Pakistan. Chief minister Farooq Abdullah said he hoped Tony Blair would concentrate on solving his nation's own "problems", and not interfere in Kashmir. Indian officials have privately expressed fears over the Labour Party's stance on Kashmir.

Reuters — New Delhi

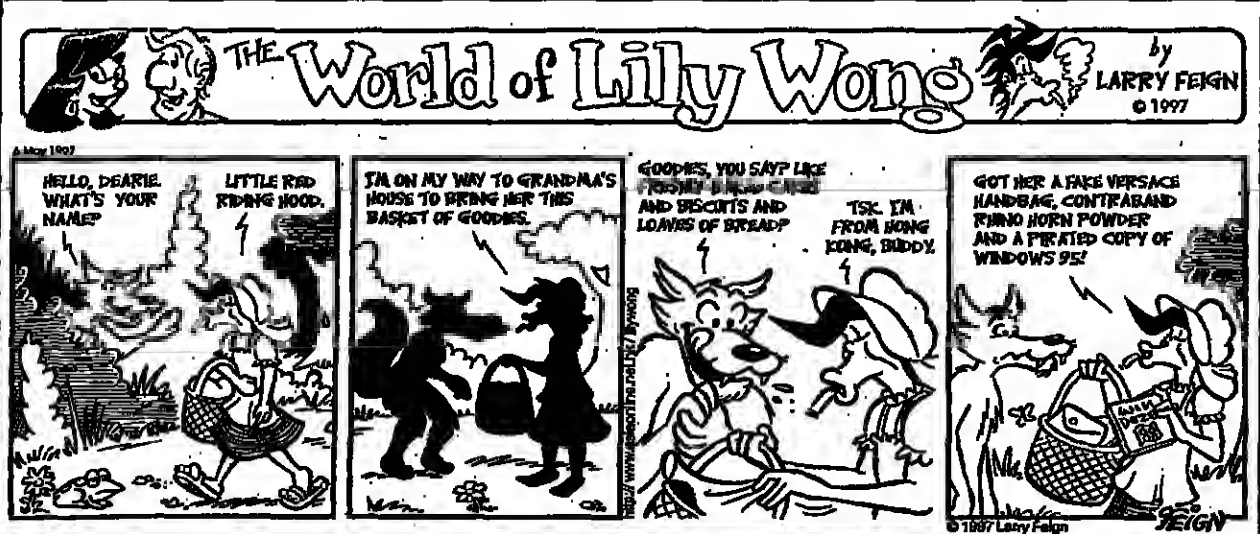
#### Money-laundering exposed

Belgian tax authorities are investigating a report that foreign leaders, political parties, sects and private individuals are laundering cash through bank accounts in Luxembourg. The weekly financial newsletter *Faxtel* said the accounts belonged among others to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko. Reuters — Brussels

#### Yemen election claims

The secretary-general of Yemen's ruling General People's Congress, Abdul-Karim al-Iryani, said it won 187 seats in the 301-member parliament in elections. Some 39 independents had joined the GPC making it the largest bloc in parliament. He said the Islah Party, the GPC's Islamist coalition partner, had won 54 seats.

Reuters — Sanaa



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Three parties  
a new world



# Action please, not words, on power-sharing

In all the scenes of relief and jubilation last week, not to mention the continuing excitement at the sheer novelty of it all, the air of calm about the incoming Prime Minister was striking. Despite being released from the constraints of vote-catching, Tony Blair continued to deliver his single transferable speech for the campaign, three times on election night and again on the steps of Downing Street on Friday. John Prescott skipped into Number 10 this, but Mr Blair remained resolute in his self-control. Many of those watching on television were puzzled. Surely he could say what he likes now, he doesn't have to be so careful. Does he not realise that he has won?

The truth is that he has won one election, but is already campaigning for the next. The one thing that is known about the character of the man who will rule us for the next four or five years is that he is serious about the acquisition and use of power. And Mr Blair will clearly have learnt one lesson from John Major, which is that he spent too much time governing and not enough campaigning.

This may seem a slightly depressing observation, and there will certainly be a sense of anti-climax among those who hoped the control freaks would allow the "real" Mr Blair out now. The Independent is not among those, on both sides of politics, who accepted at face value his promise that he would be

more radical in government than in opposition. Nor do we think the real Mr Blair is different from the elusive, serious-minded person who presented himself for election. But we are anxious that his government should translate some of the rhetoric of a "new politics" into reality.

We urged him to invite Liberal Democrats to serve in his administration; he has not. But that is part of the post-landslide logic of politics. Had Paddy Ashdown agreed to join the Blair government, he would have had to make Blair offer him something first – in other words, to change a policy, perhaps on voting reform, which had just been endorsed by Labour voters at the polls. New Labour would have been outraged. But if Ashdown had joined without such a change, he would have split his own party merely for the pleasure of helping to implement another party's programme.

All in all, then, the better part of valour. Yet valour is still needed. So far the Prime Minister has offered the rhetoric of pluralism and the fact of centralism. He should consider further the lessons of his great landslide.

The last landslide in this country was, after all, the one which brought him into the Commons and which, as much as any political event, shaped his outlook. He always expressed his distaste for the defeatism which proclaimed that Margaret Thatcher did not have a

true democratic mandate in 1983 because she won her 144-seat majority on an unfair electoral system with only 44 per cent of the vote.

He recognised that it was Labour's failure which allowed her to win, and that some of what she did was necessary and right. But there was a dangerous and undemocratic absence of checks and balances. That was how he spoke at the time. The question now is how much Mr Blair will volunteer to subject his own rule to democratic restraint.

Let us spell out the arithmetic. Labour won 44.4 per cent of the vote. If parliamentary seats were allocated

proportionally, Mr Blair would command 285 MPs, rather than the 419 he now has. (The other, more satisfying, paradox is that the Tories would have had 201 seats instead of 165; perhaps they will now come round to electoral reform in the way that they are turning to devolution in Scotland and Wales, where they failed to win a single seat.)

The Liberal Democrats achieved a breakthrough to win 46 seats, but still have fewer than half the 110 they would have in a proportional system.

All that is, for Mr Blair, beside the point. There is no perfect system, he says, so he is not persuaded of the case

for change. Leave aside the obvious riposte, that the present system is the least perfect of all, and let us concentrate on Mr Blair's desire to stay in power for a long time.

There has been some loose talk about how the size of Labour's landslide guarantees Mr Blair a second parliamentary term. It does no such thing. Clement Attlee's postwar victory, a 146-seat majority, lasted just six years (although there's another argument for electoral reform: Labour actually won more votes in 1951 than the Conservatives). And there is some evidence that the electorates of advanced Western democracies are becoming more volatile. There was the collapse of the Socialist Party in France, the mid-term Republican landslide in America in 1994, the Canadian wipe-out and so on.

Electoral reform is an issue which is not of central importance to the British voter. And the referendum which has been promised is not an early priority for the new government. There is much to be done for jobs and education. But if Mr Blair is serious in his large talk of a new political settlement for this country, it is an essential catalyst. It could give a progressive government of the centre a lock on power that was quite different in nature from the elective dictatorship of the past 18 years.

So, he has not brought Liberal Democrats into government. He may not have decided yet whether annexa-

tion or partnership is his goal. But there are other ways of skinning this cat – real devolution, open government, the use of outside advisers, freer rules for civil servants... and then voting reform too. In his euphoria, Mr Blair, with his middle-distance stare with which we will all become more familiar, is already looking towards 2001 and 2002. Let us hope that gazing into the future will persuade him to share some of the unprecedented power which the British people have lent him.

## A very human endgame

So a computer, Deep Blue, beats Garry Kasparov at chess. Its makers, IBM, are jumping up and down with glee. More than that, they are trying to assure the world that the chess game, and all the technological development which was poured into it, was really about creating a better world. After the Kasparov game, IBM will be better able to forecast the weather, develop gene therapies and so on. Maybe. But let us not be fooled. Weather forecasting wasn't why a bunch of programmers created Deep Blue any more than rocket scientists are really trying to develop better toasters. They wanted to beat Kasparov. It is a very human thing to want to do.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Here are the causes of crime

Sir: On the Tuesday before election day, I visited my local magistrates' court and sat in on a number of cases.

Each case I witnessed had a common theme – young, uneducated people, pleading guilty to mainly petty criminal offences. The majority of the defendants were unrepresented, were either in low-paid employment or were without work and clearly had insufficient education to comprehend the language of the court. Each defendant could be regarded as a "child of Thatcherism".

This was not a scene unfolding in a depressed inner-city area; it was in the prosperous market town of Maidstone. Near to the court building was a political hoarding proclaiming, "Britain is Booming – Don't Let Labour Blow It".

As a Labour voter, I celebrated long into the early hours of Friday morning, I long and hope for a new start and a rejuvenation of British society. Whether I shall still vote Labour in five years' time will depend strongly on how successful the new government is in attacking inequality and deprivation and restoring pride and opportunity. BILL STONEHAM Maidstone, Kent

Sir: Paul Cavendish laments (letter, 2 May) the overcrowding in Britain's jails, which he attributes to "an increasingly crude penal policy". Perhaps that is indeed the cause. But could he also, from his presumably informed position as chairman of the Penal Affairs Consortium, say to what extent, if any, the problem might be due to more people committing crimes for which the penalty is imprisonment? MICHAEL PHILLIPS Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire

### Three parties in a new world

Sir: This election marks a decisive rejection of hard-right ideology. It is shown not only in the disastrous performance of the Conservative Party but also in a very poor showing of the anti-European, anti-abortion and anti-black candidates.

Tony Blair has brilliantly articulated this anti-Conservative mood and I congratulate him. He has yet to articulate his vision of what he is for. In this task, the presence of the strongest third party force since 1929 can play a vital part. These MPs are an extremely able group of people elected on a clear philosophy and clear policies. They will have a vital part to play in the next parliament. What sort of part that will be may have something to do with what Blair does next. EARL RUSSELL Liberal Democrat Social Security Spokesman House of Lords London SW1

Sir: Following their momentous rout, the Conservatives will now be trying to discover what went wrong. While I see no need to comment on all the more recent reasons, may I point to a much earlier one which they may possibly overlook? It is well known that Margaret Thatcher was inclined to surround herself only with those who were "one of us". She ensured that many capable people were excluded and



that those who remained were all from the same mould. There was then no in-built resilience, or, to use a scientific analogy, biological diversity, in her coterie. An understandable strategy, perhaps, in the very short term, but this legacy has meant that in the longer term the Conservatives have not been equipped to temper their own excesses, as they discovered to their cost last Thursday.

Fortunately, there are signs that the new Labour government recognises the need for diversity in both opinion and expertise and sees it as a strength and not as a threat. DR IAN R McLAUCHLIN Dursley, Gloucestershire

Sir: After the Moment of Truth – all those blue-rosetted corpses whirling along the nation's neglected and crumbling sewage pipes – we face the Moment of Ecstasy. At last, New Labour's troupe of swaying odalisques must start shedding fabric in their Dance of the 40 Veils.

For three years they've plotingly resisted every prurient hood, every wolf-whistle to reveal so much as an ankle or wristbone. What contours will the belated striptease reveal? Raquel Welch? Hattie Jacques? Or a replicant Margaret Hilda? Why are so many Tony-mugged victims uneasily gripped by the anticipation that the shedding will have a stronger – and displeasing – impact on liver and bowels than on loins? How maddening if that glimpse of Tony's stocking is simply shocking – and off-putting. JOHN SELEPPARD London W12

### Tatton triumph for Rousseau

Sir: In the spirit of your election-day banner from *The Social Contract* of Rousseau, it is especially fitting that Martin Bell should have become the Member of Parliament for Tatton. No other MP can claim to uphold a Rousseauist notion of the general will, free of all patronage or party allegiance; he alone, in his political career, need never fear the lash of a whip.

The man he defeated stands accused of a breach (which he denies) of the most fundamental of all Rousseau's principles – that of putting his own liberty up for auction and of permitting the public interest to be bought from a private purse. Sir Walter Bromley-Davenport, MP for the same constituency when it was called Knutsford, was a descendant of Richard Davenport, Rousseau's closest friend among Englishmen, who offered him a home in Derbyshire in which he drafted much of his *Confessions*.

Rousseau would no doubt have approved of an assembly, composed of citizens, like Mr Bell, who might seek to make their colleagues accountable for the questions they pose in chamber and for the gifts they receive. He would certainly have welcomed the arrival of an MP stirred by conscience and experience, among colleagues whose indifference to the commission of war crimes abroad contributed mightily to the United Kingdom's loss of international

standing over the last parliament.

If some of Mr Bell's electors may have had other reasons for supporting his candidacy, they may at least agree with him, and Rousseau, that tribunes of the people serve them most attentively. If they do not aspire to hold their seats for more than one term. ROBERT WOKLER Manchester

The writer is Reader in the History of Political Thought at the University of Manchester

### Stop treating men as morons

Sir: Let's hope that company executives and advertisers took note of Jack O'Sullivan's article (Tabloid: "Real men don't get a look-in", 28 April).

I am one of those men who have accepted the collective rubbish of our lives, yet have not voiced frustration with the present portrayal of men in adverts and soap operas (though I have little time to see the latter). I see men who work hard to support their families, set aside at least one night a week for time with their wife and children and still find time to provide service in the community rather than visit the pub or golf course. I deplore the depiction of women as sex objects, but two demeaning portrayals don't make a right.

Women have rightly gained increasing respect for their role in and out of the home but the tendency to portray men as

infantile morons does nothing for either cause. Only when both sexes respect each other can the collective confidence of the sexes be improved.

For the sake of company profits, the executives ought to be aware that in our home more than half the weekly shopping is done by the father. KEITH REYNOLDS Coventry

### Gay protest at Communion

Sir: The provost of Southwark Cathedral says "the case of homosexual people will not be furthered" by our protest against Anglican homophobia during Morning Eucharist ("Cathedral protesters confront bishops", 28 April).

This service was attended by the 60 bishops planning the 1998 Lambeth Conference. They are refusing to schedule any serious debate on the issues of gay clergy and homosexual human rights. The indignities suffered by gay people are apparently deemed unworthy of consideration. Faced with their intransigence, we had no option but to confront them.

The leaders of the worldwide Anglican Communion support gay inequality, with the Church in Britain openly discriminating against homosexuals.

Clergy in loving, same-sex relationships live in fear of dismissal (a fear that has been

exacerbated by the Archbishop of Canterbury's recent statement that these priests have no place in the Church). Anglican parishes and anti-gay Christian cults teach that homosexuals need "curing". The Church of England Children's Society prohibits fostering by gay people. When the House of Lords voted on the age of consent, not a single bishop endorsed equality.

Securing homosexual human rights is more important than maintaining the decorum of Morning Eucharist. We cannot be expected to halt our protests while the Church pursues policies of homophobic discrimination. PETER TATCHELL OutRage! London W1

### Now to rebuild the art world

Sir: Of course the "culturalists" hate the Tories" (Jonathan Glancey, "Culture is booming, just don't blow it", 2 May). It was the Tories who eroded those institutions that provided for an educated art world.

A society built on greed and self-centred arrogance will quickly find its reflection in the slick, superficial art that Mr Glancey describes. Thatcher's people destroyed the fabric of our institutions by denying them funds. Art schools closed, staff strunk in numbers. Business folk made art their plaything, turning the visual arts into a children's world, similar to and even overlapping the pop music industry.

I remember pre-1979 in a very different way. We can't go back, but we can rebuild. NORMAN DILWORTH Amsterdam

### Intrepid cyclist takes on killers

Sir: M Fiedler (letter, 2 May) is right that many motorists are inconsiderate. However, I cannot agree with her implication that cycling is too dangerous to contemplate. When you know what you are doing, the dangers of cycling are outweighed by the advantages, and indeed it was found that improved fitness gives cyclists a higher life expectancy than motorists (Cycling for Health and Fitness BMA/OUF 1992).

In a fair world, it would be those who wear armour-plated killing machines who should be required to dress in bright yellow. In practice all too many cyclists dress very inconspicuously indeed.

Probably the greatest mistake cyclists make is to cycle too close past parked cars and generally ride too far to the left. Motorists hoot at me for making legitimate use of right-hand lanes, but in my experience, if they hoot at you that's a sign you are doing the right thing!

Thanks to such principles, even a cautious coward such as myself can negotiate fast, wide roads such as the big roundabout under Spaghetti Junction with minimal trepidation and with much exhilaration.

ROBERT P CLARKE Secretary, Birmingham Cycling Campaign Birmingham

Sir: The cyclist's frustration can be understood, but a day does not go by when cyclists are not witnessed infringing the law and the rules of common courtesy.

It appears that cyclists of all ages consider the public footpath to be a cycle lane and they take the shortest route even if it means cycling along a one-way street or wrong way. If children are not brought up to respect even the most civilised and sensible rules, and see them enforced, can we wonder at the greater disrespect for the law? JONATHAN YOUNES Sidcup, Kent

### Chamber shaped for conflict

Sir: I would fully support Derek Jones's call (letter, 5 May) for a fan-shaped Commons chamber.

The recognised way of avoiding confrontational meetings, without stifling strongly expressed opinions, is the fan-shaped or circular chamber. I found long ago that abolishing church council meetings where members glared across the room at each other, and substituting a fan-shaped gathering, allowed business to be conducted more efficiently and with less hassle. This seems to have become the norm in most meetings outside the British Parliament. The debating chambers of most of our European neighbours have the same seating, in a circular or semi-circular plan.

If we are to become a less confrontational nation, with a One Nation ethos, this is a priority, not an optional extra. CAON O H SMITH Kidderminster, Worcestershire

### PM's paper

Sir: Close examination of your Sunday sister's picture (4 May) of the Blair-eyed Cheryl at her Islington door reveals that our new Prime Minister takes *The Independent*. Clearly a paper for winners. RICHARD A D O'BRIEN Highbridge, Somerset

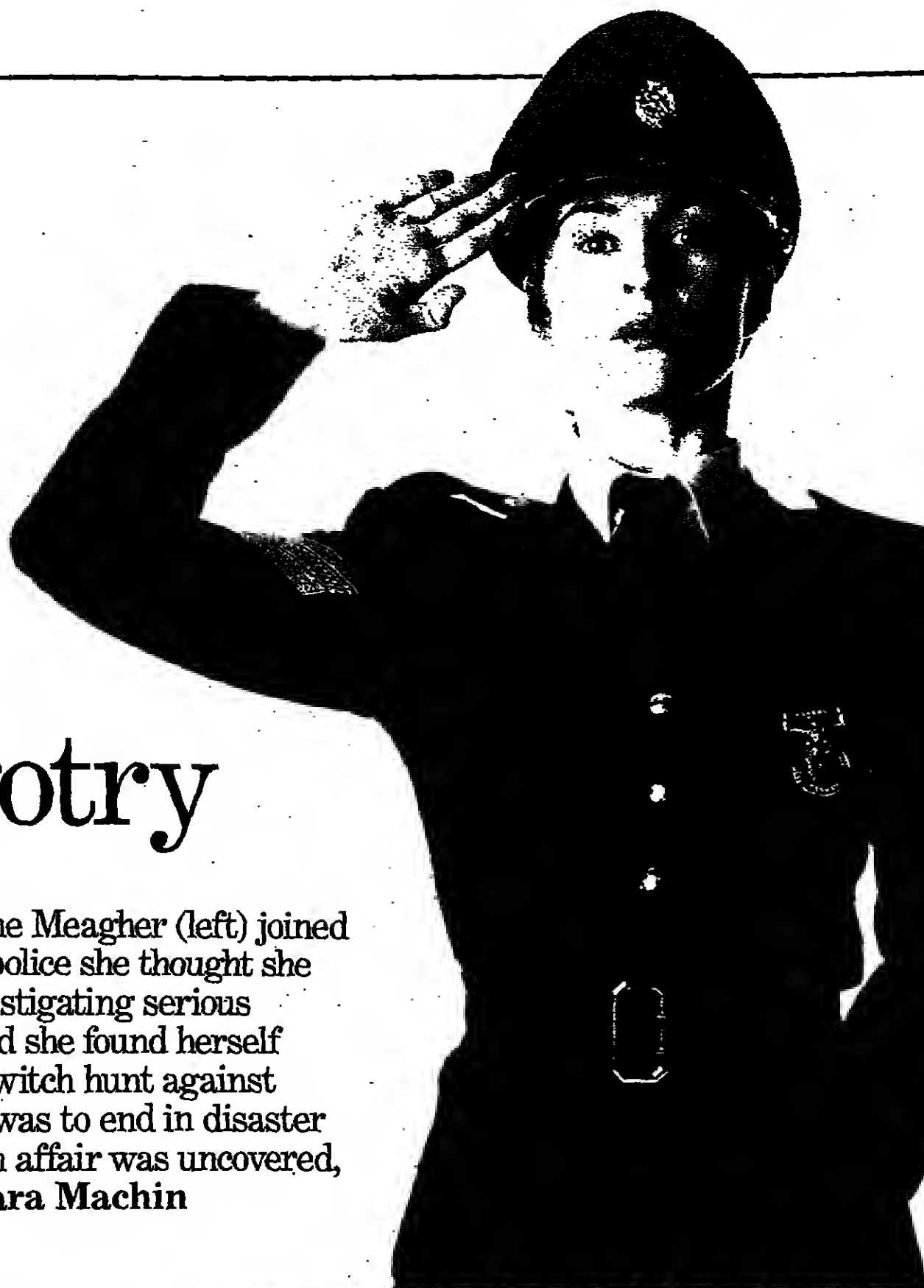


## analysis

# Salutary lessons in Army bigotry



When Caroline Meagher (left) joined the military police she thought she would be investigating serious crime. Instead she found herself involved in a witch hunt against lesbians that was to end in disaster when her own affair was uncovered, writes Barbara Machin



a detective in the SIB and was posted to Germany, where she was promoted to sergeant and went gratefully back into uniform and military police duties. Caroline's love for the Army was such that, like many in her situation, she attempted to repress her sexuality and make herself go straight. Turning her back on the past she dated men and a relationship with a male sergeant nearly led to marriage. But she couldn't go through with it. It was only after a posting to Edinburgh in 1986 that she fell in love with a female civilian teacher and finally found herself with a chance of personal happiness.

All this was shattered when she was ordered to accompany an SIB officer to a remote posting to investigate an alleged abuse of power by a female officer. Suddenly Caroline found herself plunged back into the nightmare. Another witch hunt ensued, all the women's quarters were searched and cards, letters and holiday photographs were scrutinised. No case was found against the suspect officer but camp gossip led to interrogations of two terrified young NCOs who confessed and were court-martialled. Caroline was appalled and anxious. Already unnerved by having found herself named in another investigation, a promotion posting to Ireland seemed to carry the highest risk of all. Could she sustain her relationship with her lover left in Edinburgh without discovery? It was a risk they were going to have to take together. After all, who knew better than Caroline how careful they would have to be.

Northern Ireland was grueling. Long hours and relentlessly dangerous work wore her down. Her only solace was from letters and the occasional visit from her lover. Infrequently she was able to escape to Edinburgh, the only place where they could share time together and be sure they were not being watched. Meanwhile a fierce SIB interrogation of one of the women in her platoon reminded her graphically of how close she always was to discovery. One night after a drunken mess party Caroline received a phone call from a friend, a female senior officer, inviting her to join her for a drink in her room. Oppressed by the camp claustrophobia and the fear of constant surveillance, Caroline jumped in her car and drove off the base. Her departure was noted. The question of whether or not she accepted that invitation was to become part of her downfall.

Only a few days later two SIB

officers walked into her office. Caroline enquired why they had come. "We've come for you, Caroline," was their reply. Her room was searched, the all too familiar techniques employed. She found herself marched to an interrogation room where days of endless questions about letters, photos and camp gossip ensued. She endured unrelenting hours of salacious slurs and innuendo but she refused to confess.

The next interrogations were about a minor discrepancy the SIB had unearthed in her travelling expenses. All Derry postings were allowed subsidised travel back to the mainland to visit family or fiancés and rules were routinely fudged to include boyfriends and girlfriends. Rather than lie about making visits to her family when she had in fact been travelling to Edinburgh, Caroline had filled in her forms giving her lover's name and address. She paid the price for her honesty: she was charged with obtaining property by deception.

Ironically, a month before her investigation had started Caroline had decided she couldn't endure the pressure that Army life put on her relationship any further and had handed in her resignation. That was to make no difference. The SIB wanted her out on their terms, and punished.

Caroline left behind 12 years of committed service, her life was shattered, her future bleak. Her real crime was to love another woman and to evade detection. She now has a criminal record. During the course of making the transcripts of her interrogations and was shattered to find another charge on her crime report file: disgraceful conduct of an unnatural kind.

There will always be a body of opinion which believes that Caroline Meagher broke the rules and should face her punishment. Alternatively it doesn't take much imagination to see that her life had been made intolerable within a system of formalised bigotry.

Until two years ago gays in the forces could face a jail sentence. Now homosexuality has been decriminalised and although prison is no longer an issue, gays are still hunted down and thrown out. In the past 10 years more than 700 servicemen and women have been discharged on the grounds of their sexuality, but many hundreds more have left after witch hunts: either dismissed for minor offences, or because they could not tolerate a life where they were constantly under suspicion.

Caroline Meagher is a talented, committed woman who only ever wanted to carve out a commendable career within a world she loved. Caroline is the Army's loss. And their shame.

Barbara Machin wrote the screenplay for 'The Investigator', which is broadcast tonight on Channel 4 at 9pm.

In 1981 Corporal Caroline Meagher, a talented young military policeman, joined the Army's elite, the Special Investigation Branch (SIB), as a plain clothes detective. The "Feds" are a legendary force with high standards dealing with all serious military crime. Caroline embarked on her new work with zeal and commitment, seeing this as a fast-track route to the top in her already promising career. What she could not have foreseen was that her elevation and ambition would lead to accusations of shocking sexual impropriety and dishonesty.

Her story has come to highlight the fierce anti-gay policy embodied by the armed services in the belief that without such restrictive practices, discipline and morale would break down irretrievably and lead to security risks and blackmail.

Although the validity of such

fears remains a subject of controversy, the extreme and often obsessive methods employed to hunt out gays have come under severe scrutiny. Britain is the only country in the EU still to maintain an anti-homosexual policy in its armed forces, and was directed by the courts last year rigorously to re-examine its practices. The pressure is on. All this comes at a time when several cases are set to go before the European Court, and Caroline Meagher's own shocking experiences have been made into a television drama to be aired tonight.

I met Caroline 12 years after she had been discharged from the Army. It was only then that she started to unravel the past. She was talking to strangers, heaping painful detail on private humiliation. It wasn't comfortable, it didn't feel good, it was the first time in 12 years she had dared to tell anyone the details of her story. She once

angrily informed the researcher and myself that it felt like she had swapped her Army interrogators for us. But her motive was always clear. This was her story, but it was also the story of hundreds of other forgotten women, a scandal which she felt compelled to expose.

Caroline Meagher joined the women's army as a starry-eyed young recruit in 1978. Already used to service life (her father is ex-RAF), she survived the bullying and the drill-to-you-drop regime to receive the famous red beret, proudly passing out as a Lance Corporal in the RMP. Ambitious from the first, she had gained admittance to the Army's best and never looked back. She was popular and fearless, a woman expecting no favours in a man's world.

Caroline couldn't believe her luck when she began work with the SIB. Getting out of uniform and starting hands-on investi-

gations into murder, violence and thefts, Caroline felt she had finally arrived. But her euphoria turned to turmoil when she found herself being briefed about the evil influence of lesbians in the women's army and the need to hunt them down. Filled with horror stories of perversion, dangerous cliques and lesbian rape, Caroline had to accept that lesbian investigations would just be part of her routine detective work with the SIB.

Investigations were triggered by gossip, tip-offs and undercover surveillance. Caroline regularly spent time with a male colleague watching and visiting army pubs, and following groups of suspected lesbians. It was well known that gay women would make sure they had "smoke-screen" boyfriends and Caroline would find herself dispatched to chat them up.

She was also shocked to discover the existence of the Lesbian Index, a complex cross-referencing system, later transferred to computer, based largely on unsubstantiated accusations. She was urged to make regular contributions, however tenuous, on the basis that if a name came up enough times, that in itself was grounds for an investigation. When she remarked to her boss that these methods seemed disproportionately

extreme, he talked of senior ranks "taking advantage" and asked her how she would like it. "If one of them came on to you?" Caroline artlessly replied that in her experience it happened all the time with men.

Real disquiet set in one winter's night when she found herself in a squad storming a

woman military police staff sergeant became more and more important and turned into love and her first real lesbian relationship. As her training in the interrogation of lesbian suspects continued, her agony increased. While Caroline struggled with the realisation that she might herself be gay she was being trained to

**'Even when a confession had been obtained, women were pushed to give graphic details of every sexual act'**

women's accommodation block, turning out lockers and confiscating sacks of letters and address books. Caroline remembers how she still naively believed the SIB's extreme propaganda. "I expected to discover cliques of lesbians with torture instruments. But all we found were terrified women shaken from sleep to find us trashing their bed spaces." One traumatised private dared to scream "SIB, shit in bulk" to her face. Caroline had no reply and, depressed and demoralised, she returned to sift through mountains of confiscated material.

Her confusion deepened as a gentle friendship with a

pressurised lesbians into confessions which would lead to courts martial. Interrogations were routinely brutal. Even when a confession had been obtained, the woman was then pushed to give graphic detail of her every sexual act. When Caroline dared to question this she was assured that many women pretended to be lesbians as an excuse to get out of the Army. The SIB insisted on explicit detail so they could be sure the confession was genuine. The strain became intolerable and Caroline's love affair foundered.

Now she was forced to make a big decision. Caroline abandoned her prestigious work as

## Meet the minister with a mission to snipe

Many close observers of the scene have privately expressed their surprise to me that my name has not figured among the new appointments made by Tony Blair.

"After all you have done to aid his success!" is the gist of what they say. "After all the withering sniping you have maintained on the Major government! The selfless way you have rejected a knighthood year after year! The way you have ceaselessly pointed out that Michael Howard doesn't work! The time you were offered a complimentary egg, chips and beans at a wayside Happy Eater by the Prime Minister but nobly turned it down with the words, 'No thanks, John - grown-up food for me!' Has none of this meant anything to the new Labour leader?"

Generally I smile, order drinks all round and say nothing. But perhaps the time has come to set the record straight. For over the weekend I was indeed summoned to No 10 Downing Street in order to hear what role I could play in the new administration.

I set out at dawn on Sunday to make the long trip to London, posing my family for

photographs on the front doorstep before leaving. What a happy picture we presented, standing there waving our Union Jacks without a touch of irony! What a shame that nobody was there to press the button on the camera, and that once after another of us had to vacate the group in order to take the photograph.

Then it was on to London, through the dear old English countryside where orange Liberal Democrat posters stood up in every hedgerow (what can be the effect of these vivid objects on the mind of hedgerow birdlife?) until we came to Downing Street and saw for the first time at close quarters the enormous iron gates which were erected to prevent Margaret Thatcher ever storming back into No 10.

Finally in through the door of No 10, where I was ushered into a large sort of annexe, to wait along with many other half-familiar faces. It was like nothing so much as being in the TV hospitality suite before a session of *Call My Bluff*. One man in a crumpled white suit I recognised from the photographs as none other than Martin Bell. "Mr Bell!" I cried. "What



Miles Kingston

brings a doughty independent like you here?"

"Have no fear," he said, "that I shall take my duties lightly. You have entrusted the stewardship of Tattler to me, and I shall not pause nor shall my sword sleep in my hand..."

"Martin!" I cried. "It's all right! You're not among voters now! You're back in the real world!"

He visibly relaxed and glanced round the annexe at all the hopeful faces. "You wouldn't think there were enough ministries for the Labour faithful," he said, "let alone people like me. What are you here for, incidentally?"

I was about to invite him to search me when his name was called. Ten minutes later he was out.

"He's made me Roving Minister for Purity," he said, smiling.

"Is that good?" "Sure. It means I have a good chance of getting a desk of my own in Westminster." Several hours later my own name was called and I faced the famous Blair smile in person for the first time.

"And which one are you?" he said, the smile never fading for a moment, as he referred discreetly to a chart of names and photos on his desk. "Trouble is," he added disarmingly, "there are so many new MPs that I never expected to get elected that I haven't got to know them yet. I am constantly being referred to as being young, but there are MPs out there who weren't even born when I had started voting. It makes you think."

"Certainly does," I agreed. "Have to slap them down straight away and slap them down hard."

He looked at me curiously, then back to his chart. "I don't seem to..." I explained briefly who I was.

"Well, if you're not an MP..." he said doubtfully. "Ah, but I could be of use to you," I said. "After all, if you can make Peter Mandelson a Minister without Portfolio, whose job it is to keep an eye on everyone else, then surely..."

"You want to keep an eye on Peter Mandelson?" "Good Lord, no. It's just that for a while you're going to go through a honeymoon period in the press. The reaction, when it comes, will be vicious. I just thought that I could help you by slipping in the odd barb straight away and redressing the balance."

"You've done this sort of thing before, haven't you?" he said, suddenly. "I did a few little jobs for Major. It mostly involved attacking Michael Howard." "Excellent!" he said. "What shall we call you?" "Minister Without Profile?"

"Excellent! An unlisted minister, never mentioned, never accredited, just quietly sniping away." "Depend on me to keep up the bad work," I promised, and shook his hand. He winced.

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## Blair places his bet on the Thin Controller

For anyone who thought Tony Blair was going to be cautious in office, the newly presidential style unveiled yesterday and particular the appointment of Peter Mandelson as his personal ministerial emissary is a salutary shock. This is a political high-roller's gambit – double or quits.

The centralising of power over interviews and policy speeches in Downing Street will be regarded as ominous by journalists. But after the PR mayhem of the Major years, and given the carnivorous appetites of the press, it is a sensible defensive measure.

More interesting is Mandelson's appointment as minister without portfolio at the centre of government – a son of mix between terrorist, vice-president and political police chief. Mandelson himself has made the case for such a job: there will be many broken-backed, scribbled-on and thumbed copies of his book *The Blair Revolution* on the bedside tables of uneasy, ill-sleeping mandarins. In it, Mandelson criticised the looseness of Downing Street and the passivity of the Cabinet Office.

Quite right: no government has benefited from the lack of central direction and hickering between the great baronies of Whitehall. Downing Street is a very British institution, which has grown up haphazardly over time, accumulating officials, committees and ways of working in reaction to crises past. It is, as it were, a common law institution. The switchboard may be superb, as Tristan Garel-Jones wrote on this page yesterday. But the heart of government is still infected by the heart of amateurish muddling through, of especially valuing the inefficient.

No longer: Mandelson has written job descriptions for No 10 and Downing Street personnel who would tighten a Prime Minister's grip on the machinery of government with a rigour we haven't seen even under Margaret Thatcher. The Cabinet Office shouldn't be simply knocking departmental heads together, he argues; it should be "itself providing policy innovation and actively promoting ideas to the various departments".

Again, he's right in principle: inter-departmental work is increasingly important: helping a young unemployed man might involve Education, Employment, Social Services and the Home Office, as well as the Treasury. Mandelson calls these "wicked issues" – persistent and intractable, mainly social, problems, which range across departmental boundaries.

So now he has the job of driving the Blair agenda from the Cabinet Office, just as he described in his book. He is the Thin Controller. Blair once said that his project would have succeeded when the Labour Party had learned to love Peter Mandelson. Now, love him or loathe him, all those cabinet ministers who thought they would be shot of him in power, safely tucked up in their own ministries, will have to think again. Mandelson will have more clout than most round the cabinet table. If he succeeds, he will be mimicking the tight central control over colleagues he exercised for Blair up to and during the campaign.

When Blair said on the steps of Downing Street, "we have been elected as New Labour and we will govern as New Labour" that was partly what he meant. Opposition, instead of being an embarrassment to be quickly forgotten in power, becomes a model for power. Mandelson will be a guardian of the central sense of direction, the discipline, the thoroughness and the attention to detail that marked New Labour in the past months. He seemed delighted. But if he's wise he will be taking it on with a certain wariness and unease.

For if Blair has handed him an important assignment, it is also a dangerous one. It may make Mandelson feared, but it will not make him loved. Tory anger at the "Stalinist" control of New Labour will be echoed by leftist MPs.



Andrew Marr

That may not matter. But if Mandelson's Cabinet Office is indeed to be the pro-active centre and progress-chaser in government, then it instantly diminishes at least two other rival power-centres. The first is John Prescott's title as Deputy Prime Minister, though he may be so busy with his super-ministry as not to care. The second is the Treasury: Gordon Brown's aides have made it clear in the past that they thought a Labour Treasury would need to have a more active and coordinating role in government.

It is well known that neither Prescott nor Brown are consumed with the ardour of their affection for Mandelson. So at the outset it looks as if Blair may be putting his closest political friend into a job that is almost certain to bring him into a struggle for dominance with old enemies. This is brave, or rash, and maybe both. It is certainly self-confident. Mandelson's authority will depend on Blair's aura. Since Blair is potentially the most powerful politician in the post-war history of this country, able to do almost anything he wants, that's quite an aura.

But it doesn't make the job easy. Mandelson will have to take on big departments which are not only led by big people, but which possess more powerful corporate identities and pride than his own. Much will depend on whether he can win the trust and affection of people who have so far loathed him neither.

If he fails, Blair himself will not immediately suffer. When ministers get into a battle with Mandelson then the only person they can go to to resolve the matter is the Prime Minister. He becomes the popular compromise-broker, working behind and after the more abrasive and aggressive Mandelson. The danger, however, is that defeats for Mandelson would be seen as defeats for Blair.

So will he – can he – succeed? Like so much in politics, it is a test, above all, of personality. He should bear in mind that Michael Heseltine was successful because he kept his mouth shut and was notably generous to colleagues, even when they were struggling. Heseltine didn't gossip over lunch, or brief journalists about who had screwed up. Once one of life's great self-promoters, he taught himself a deep discretion that won the respect of his natural enemies in the Tory party.

Up to now, Mandelson has been a brilliant briefer and stirrer-upper of media noise, putting people down and elevating others. He has been a media addict; he announced and described his appointment on television before it was officially confirmed. In his book, he seems to conflate the role of ministerial progress-chaser with what he calls "minister for the *Today* programme".

Well, Heseltine did a bit of that too. But being a controversial public figure is probably incompatible with being a successful Whitehall overlord. If people suspect their failures or private compromises will become known in the Sunday papers, they will not cooperate. If Mandelson is to succeed he will need to reassure suspicious rivals that he is determined, on principle, to be unhelpful to journalism.

The new administration had a choice between continuing with traditional cabinet government, with its rivalries, different personal agendas and arguments; and trying for a much tighter, semi-presidential, style of government, in which the supremacy of Downing Street over every other arm of the administration is utter and unquestioned.

Looking back at New Labour's campaigning, and the landslide it produced, and reflecting on Blair's admiration for Margaret Thatcher's sense of purpose, I don't think we need waste too much time speculating which of them the new Prime Minister wanted. UnBritish? Maybe so, but given Labour's past failures and the pressures on modern government, it may also be essential.

## A manifesto for moral and spiritual problems

by Cardinal Basil Hume

As the winds of political change blow down Whitehall, there is a palpable sense of hope and optimism. Yet we cannot expect any government alone to solve the most fundamental problems we face, for these are not only economic and social, but also moral and spiritual.

We have to recognise, first, that respect is due to every human being simply by virtue of our common humanity. Then we must realise that we are interdependent. Catholic social teaching calls this solidarity. It can be seen as a moral criterion whereby human behaviour and action should be determined by care and concern for each other, and a commitment to the common good.

Such considerations as these no doubt played a part, for many in all parties, in prompting debates in the election campaign – especially on key issues such as education, the National Health Service, and Europe. But now is the moment to consider some other fundamental issues. These did not attract the same attention, though they also exercise the minds of a great number of people.

The first duty of any society is to respect and protect human life itself. While this may seem obvious, its full consequences are not always appreciated, for human life begins at conception. Abortion virtually on demand is one of the greatest scandals of our time. This is not only because of the destruction of human life, but also because of the hidden suffering of so many women.

It was highly significant that during the election broadcasters refused to screen uncensored the Pro-Life Alliance party film. If abortion so offends against taste and decency, why should we be tolerating 500 abortions every day in this country? I saw the film. It is shocking, but the reality is worse.

It only became possible to outlaw slavery in the last century when enough people saw clearly what was involved. They recoiled in horror at the practice, and worked to abolish it. There is a similar need to change minds and hearts today. The moral case against abortion will ultimately prevail when enough people come to see that abortion is not only wrong in itself, but is even more abhorrent than slavery.

We need also to beware of the arguments now being put forward in favour of euthanasia. What is trumpeted as the right to die for terminally ill people could very quickly become the duty to die for elderly people who felt themselves a burden to others.

A second urgent issue is the family. It is there that children first develop, for good or ill, the habits and values that govern their relationships with others. Recent research has highlighted the adverse long-term consequences for children of family breakdown. This country



From Church to state: Cardinal Hume with Tony Blair

Photograph: Reuters

Now is the moment to consider some fundamental issues which did not attract much attention in the election

has the highest divorce rate in Europe, with 40 per cent of new marriages predicted to end in divorce. There are also rising levels of cohabitation. I understand the evidence so far is that these relationships are even less durable than marriages.

The frightening problem of children born without love or commitment in unstable situations must be addressed.

Many of the social, cultural and economic pressures that threaten family life are beyond the power of government to control directly. Individuals are responsible for their actions, but public policy can tackle poverty, unemployment, poor housing, and economic insecurity which all contribute to family stress. It can also promote personal sexual responsibility through education for parenthood, and by requiring absent parents to support their children. We should promote the life-long commitment of marriage between a man and a

woman as the stable basis of family life. We must put the health of the family centre stage, and the Government must assess the impact on families when policy changes are made.

Families have become increasingly divided between the "work rich" (where both partners are working) and the "work poor" (where neither has a job). One in five households of working age has no breadwinner; 25 per cent of children in England are now living in families on income support. Addressing this situation must have priority. It is both a matter of justice for those deprived of opportunity, and essential if we are to avoid more people lacking any sense of belonging to the wider community.

Solidarity creates commitments at many levels: family, town, region, nation, continent, global. Local loyalties are important, but they should not

be opposed to wider expressions of solidarity. Much of the election campaign seemed to be confined to the interests of this country, even to the exclusion of Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland only appeared to figure prominently through the contemptible disruptive actions of the IRA. A new horizon opened in the province with the cease-fires of 1994, and many people hoped that trust would take root. Despite recent difficulties in the province, agreements have

already made between the British and Irish governments embracing the principle of consent before any constitutional change can take place. There is also on-going contact between the main democratic political parties, with round-table talks due to resume in June.

Our new government must make strenuous efforts to rekindle the fire of hope in all the people of the province, by encouraging all parties to renounce violence unequivocally and to undertake substantive face to face talks, and by focusing on the mutual gains which a broadly agreed settlement could bring.

There are many other vital areas that attracted little election coverage but are of great concern to many people, such as the drug culture, increased violence on our streets, the arms trade, and the global environment. I would single out, however, helping the poorest in our world.

The poorest fifth of the world's population – one billion people – live in absolute poverty. They consume just 1.4 per cent of the world's income whereas the richest fifth takes 83 per cent. Relative affluence and success create responsibilities for individuals and society. We share a common humanity with those in greatest need. We must be more generous with well-targeted aid, more determined to cancel unpayable third world debt and to help the poorest countries to tackle corruption and gain easier access to world markets.

The truth is that we live in one world, peopled by one human family in which every person matters. Our awareness of this truth deepens when we recognise that we are all children of God, made in his image and likeness. In fact a spiritual quest (which I cannot pursue here) lies at the heart of any search for moral health and vitality, whether personal or social.

Whatever our religious beliefs, however, we can surely agree that what will draw people together into a more cohesive society is an open spirit of solidarity, founded on a shared sense of mutual responsibility. We have no right to expect a better future for our society as we approach the millennium unless we all commit ourselves to working for each other, that is, for the common good. We cannot lay these expectations on the Government alone.

The writer is the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster.

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ELECTORAL REFORM SOCIETY

## Swinging Sixties, new-look Nineties

Suddenly the 1960s are being re-evaluated. This newspaper recently asked whether Marshall McLuhan, one of the most influential pundits of the decade, was in fashion again, 17 years after his death. Certainly the insight for which he is most celebrated – "The medium is the message" – has never gone out of circulation.

Likewise, in the past year alone, two biographies of R D Laing, the Scottish psychotherapist, who died in 1989, have been published. The first of his international best-sellers, *The Divided Self: a study of sanity and madness*, came out initially with a small print-run in 1960. His enduring appeal is illustrated by passages such as the following: "No one has schizophrenia, like having a cold. The patient has not got schizophrenia. He is a schizophrenic. The schizophrenic has to be known without being destroyed." How? By understanding. And for understanding "one might say love". Next Sunday a one-day conference exploring Laing's legacy is to be held in London (Mahatma Gandhi Hall, Fitzroy Square, W1).

There is more. The Festival Hall in London has been running a series of talks and lectures on the 1960s. *Pinner's golden decade* was the title of one session. And at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, there has just opened an exhibition, entitled *Les Sixties: Great Britain and France, 1962-1973*. This show, which has come from Paris and runs until 29 June, examines the explosion of art and popular culture during the decade.



Andreas Whittam Smith

The second half of our decade resembles the 1960s in some ways, with a little optimism in the air

One reason for this burgeoning interest is that the 1960s have always remained a fabulous period in people's minds, like the 1920s. Now sufficient time has elapsed to allow a sorting-out of the wheat from the chaff. The 30-year anniversary dates are beginning to clock up. In July it will be 30 years since Laing organised a Congress on the Dialectics of Liberation (such a 1960s title!) at the Roundhouse in Chalk Farm, London. Among the participants were Herbert Marcuse, Stokely Carmichael and Allen Ginsberg, and the proceedings were later written up as a Penguin paperback. In October a similar period of time will have elapsed since Che Guevara, the Argentinian revolutionary, was killed by Bolivian troops. Biographies and documentaries of this martyr of the left are marking the event.

There is also a feeling that the second half of the 1990s resembles the 1960s in some ways. Once again London is being exalted around the world as "cool". It has become the most popular place in the world for designer stores. British fashion designers are taking the top jobs in Paris. Our pop music excels. British films are in vogue. In matters of style we are self-confident and successful, precisely as we were 30 years ago.

Arguably the most important development of the Sixties took place at the very beginning. On 15 May, 1960, the first contraceptive pill was given a licence in the United States. British trials took place a year later, and although at first the pill could only be advertised to doctors and issued on prescription to married women, a great social revolution had

begun. Fears about harmful side-effects were soon generated, and alarm was expressed about the encouragement of promiscuity; but women had gained control over their own fertility.

Restraints on pre-marital sex became almost impossible to justify. The first of a series of dramatic changes in the relationships between men and women had begun. It led to feminism, which was a feature of subsequent decades. Germaine Greer published *The Female Eunuch* in 1970. And it led on to changes in family structure through which we are still working.

Alongside this profound change in social relationships, there began a second revolution in economic affairs. The opening up of stockmarkets during the 1960s to middle-income savers, via the development of mutual funds in the US and unit trusts in the United Kingdom, was again a first step with enormous consequences. Private companies came to the market in great numbers, takeover battles became commonplace (the first in London took place in 1959 and made Warburg's name). The Lords Weinstock and Hanson began their careers in the 1960s with a series of dazzling stockmarket moves.

The pattern was the same in the US. The development of a new form of international capitalism, the Anglo-Saxon liberal version, was underway. Thirty years later it is becoming a global system.

What was most striking about the 1960s, however, was a revolution in attitude. Events were driven by the young. The post-war baby boom came of age in the 1960s. Young people comprised

an above-average proportion of the population and, significantly, young people had money because they were all in work, or in higher education supported by adequate state or local authority funding. Their sheer number and spending power imparted a wonderful self-confidence – they could change things.

At hand, too, was a universal means of expression, pop music, particularly rock 'n' roll, sold cheaply on 45-rpm records. This American phenomenon of the mid-1950s, exemplified by the incredible success of Elvis Presley, aided by the rise of a new breed of local radio stations in the US and later in the UK, swept the world. Indeed some people date the true beginning of the 1960s from 5 October 1962, when the Beatles' first 45-rpm record, *Love Me Do*, was released.

This sense of being in the driving seat also took the more violent form of street protests, culminating in 1968, a year of massive demonstrations in the US against the Vietnam War and elsewhere, particularly in Paris, against so-called Western imperialism. Street protests on such a scale were not to be seen again until 1989 in East Europe.

This 1960s notion that anything was possible has never been repeated. Young people are still experimental, rebellious and so on. But they are fundamentally more cautious than their parents were at the same age. Now the struggle is to survive; then the struggle was to change things. Except that on the morrow of New Labour's overwhelming success in the election, I detect a little bit of 1960s optimism on the air once more. It is a good feeling.



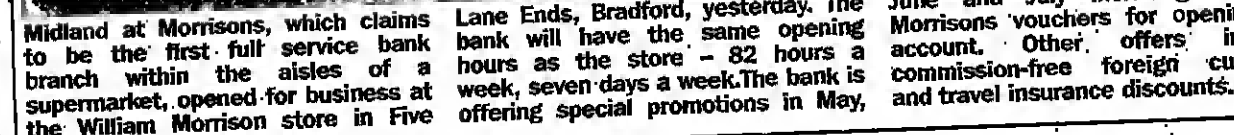
**GAVYN DAVIES**

President Clinton's decision to pardon the two men has been widely criticized. "It's a slap in the face to the victims," says a spokesman for the Justice Dept. "It's a slap in the face to the public's sense of justice." The pardon also has been criticized by the FBI, which says the two men were not innocent. The FBI says the two men were not innocent. The FBI says the two men were not innocent.

Labour's sudden reversal has been watched down in recent years, though the party remains committed to sharing excess company profits with consumers on top of the existing system of price cap regulation, which cuts bills by a formula of each year based on the rate of inflation. The regulators themselves would be backed by boards playing a non-executive role, a policy supported by the CBI and several utilities themselves.

But there was disappointment that Geoffrey Hoon, Labour's shadow telecommunications and science minister, was leaving the DTI brief to join the Lord Chancellor's department. Mr Hoon had also been the party's spokesman on the millennium computer crisis, which is likely to be a serious headache for the Government.

Robin Guenier, head of the force 2000 the government sponsored advisory group set up to publicise the problem, said Mr Hoon's move was bad news



The business community is evenly split on the new Government's ability to handle the economy, according to a snap poll of 600 businessmen across the country carried out by Dun & Bradstreet.

But among those businessmen who thought the election was important for their business, those who felt the impact would be positive outnumbered the negatives by six to four.

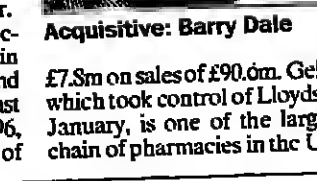
Just 45 per cent of the sample said they were confident of the Government's ability to handle the economy. A similar number were not confident and the remaining 10 per cent either did not know or thought it was too early to say.

Almost 40 per cent thought the election result was not important for their business. But of those who believe it is important 58 per cent thought it would be helpful against 38 per cent who said it would have a negative effect.

rance to the first stage. The biologist of birds was drawn up within two weeks with a deal sealed for completion next month.

Venture capital sources there were no commercial bidders. There has been speculation that General Nutrition Centre, a US group with a presence here, might be interested. There has also been speculation that Allen L. the former Lloyds Chemist founder, might take an option.

Holland & Barrett was acquired by Lloyds Chemist in 1991 when it had 19 stores and annual sales of £48m. In the financial year, to 30 June, it recorded operating pro-



The French government is bidding directly for Thomson's grounds it would be a French security interest in a foreign company to own more than 50 per cent of the company has also talked to both Lagardere already with 'satellite joint venture' through Matra Marconi and a missile venture with Matra-Bae Dynamics. Lagardere is a partner with GEC Alsthom, a specialist joint venture in power engineering.

These secondary deals appear to influence the content of the bids. The French government favours cre-

British Insurers said it was supporting Shell in its fight against its rebel shareholders, who promises to be at the annual meeting on 14 May.

Speaking at the meeting, former Shell executive Geoffrey Chandler, who is the board of Amnesty International. He will call on the group to accept "social auditing" of human rights performance in order to ensure that the company has a new commitment to the environment in practice.

Other speakers include

- The number of mergers and acquisitions in Northern Ireland rose 17 per cent last year, according to a new report from the mergers and acquisitions specialist, Company Broking Consultants. Companies based outside Northern Ireland accounted for over 40 per cent of the 48 changes of ownership in the area, representing an investment of around £250m in the economy.
- Great North Eastern Railway (GNER) yesterday opened what it claims is the UK's largest rail telesales office, employing 250. The new £750,000 mine is expected to take 1.3 million ticket bookings a year. It's first year's operation, handling 25,000 telephone reservations for travel on high-speed services between London, Yorkshire, the North-east and Scotland.
- Repent Pacific Group Limited, the Hong Kong emerging markets investment house in which Hambros Bank holds a 25 per cent stake, launches its initial public offering today at a 10 per cent share discount.

The launch of a HK\$ 447m placing and new issue by the company at HK\$ 2.949/bn. The announcement of a merger with the possibility that Hambros may face legal action over its role in Andrew Regan's failed £1.2bn bid for the Co-Op.

## CURRENCIES

**£/\$**

**£/DM**

Pound vs.

	Close	Week's Chg	Yr Ago
\$ (London)	1.6182	-1.31c	1.4984
\$ (NY York)	1.6220	-0.25c	1.5025
DM (London)	2.7870	-0.27p	2.2982
Y (London)	205.08s	-0.42s	136.33s
\$ Index	99.7	-0.1	83.7

Dollar vs.

	Close	Week's Chg	Yr Ago
£ (London)	0.6180	+0.50	0.6689
£ (NY York)	0.6185	+0.09	0.6656
DM (London)	1.7265	+1.23p	1.5328
Y (London)	126.46p	+0.70p	136.33s
\$ Index	100.0	+0.3	95.4

## OTHER INDICATORS

Close	Week's Chg	Yr Ago	Index	Latest Tr Mo	18 Mts Ago
Oil Brent \$	17.81	-0.54	18.79	RPI	155.4 +2.6pct 150.9 19
Gold \$	339.90	-1.15	393.20	GDP	109.7 +2.6pct 107.0 25
Gold £	210.45	+0.44	262.24	Base Rates	- 6.00pct 6.75 -

- **The Transport & General Workers Union**, with 100,000 members in local government today overruled a minority status deal aimed at getting a minimum wage, a ban on eliminating discrimination between male, female and full- and part-time workers, and a ban on casual and white collar workers. Jack Dromey, public relations secretary of the TGWU, said he was confident of a unanimous vote to push through the agreement.
- **Compaq Computer Corp** announced yesterday it would cut prices on a number of products, including its business desktop personal computers, by up to 33 per cent. This is the third time this year that the company has announced its intention to cut its prices, in a bid to extend its market share lead. Compaq is already the global leader in personal computer sales.
- **Nikko Securities Co International**, a division of Japan's Nikko Securities Co Ltd, has named Timothy Cronin to president and co-chief executive. Mr Cronin was previously Faine's Member Group's vice-president and co-chief executive. He will take the place on the board. He will share the titles with Toshiro Yokoyama, and together the pair will serve as co-president and co-chief executive officer of Nikko Americas Holding Co.

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GAVYN DAVIES

For Labour to fulfil its dream of winning two complete terms, its leaders need to remain as canny as warriors against complacency. If they are as canny as they look, they will be perfectly aware that the 2002 election campaign has already started.

## Brown should not discount the Tories just yet

Gordon Brown will by now have absorbed the Treasury's welcoming brief, so he will know whether the famous (though largely apocryphal) government "books" support the case for the early tax increase that is being demanded by much of the economics profession in this country. Funnily enough, nobody seems to believe that this tax increase is needed to correct a rapidly deteriorating budget deficit position. In fact, the Treasury forecast for this year's public sector borrowing requirement will probably be around 0.5 per cent of GDP lower than expected at the time of Kenneth Clarke's final Budget, and there will be further improvements in the projected path for government borrowing in each year of the new parliament.

Despite this, it is alleged that tax increases will inevitably be needed at some point to correct the "unsustainability" of the government accounts. Last week, this column examined these arguments in detail, and concluded that the case was somewhat hazy, depending on very uncertain estimates of how much spare capacity exists in the economy. This will determine how rapidly GDP and government revenue can be expected to grow in the next five years. Take an optimistic view of this issue, and there will be no problem with the sustainability of the government's finances; take a pessimistic view, and there will be. Anyone who claims to know the answer to this question today with any certainty is a charlatan.

Quite separately, it is also argued that tax increases are

needed immediately to reduce the growth of consumer spending, thus taking the upward pressure off base rates and slowing. There is indeed a strong case for storing a consumer sector which is already growing at a dangerous 4-5 per cent annual rate in real terms, even before the impact of the £20bn building society windfall has been felt.

Perhaps even more worrying, the National Institute pointed out last week that equity withdrawal from the housing market – the process by which consumers borrow against the security of their homes to increase their general spending – has been rising sharply in recent quarters. But the possible impact of these special factors is so large that a consumer tax increase of at least £7bn would be needed to correct the situation, and that is surely not feasible.

Some, or all, of the work will inevitably need to be done by higher interest rates. Of course, every little bit helps, and the tax lobby

reckons that there will never be a better time politically to increase the tax burden, on the theory that the electorate will have forgotten about this little indiscretion in five years' time.

"Take the pain early, and dispense the rewards later," is the most traditional mantra of British politics. It is certainly alive and well in the recommendations of most of today's commentators. Some have added a new thought since polling day – that the Tories are anyway dead and buried for at least a decade, so there is an extra reason for "doing the right thing" on the tax burden.

This is dangerous thinking for New Labour. For one thing, the experience of the past five years scarcely offers support for the "early pain, late rewards" view of the electoral cycle. As David Blake, political analyst at Goldman Sachs, has pointed out, the most compelling fact about the last parliament was that the normal "quadratic" pattern of government support – a pattern that has been observed in almost every parliamentary term since the war – was entirely absent.

The quadratic is a simple algebraic function which is shaped like a large U. This function happens to fit the normal pattern of government support in the course of a parliament very closely. Until the 1992-97 experience, the norm was for government support to decline automatically for about 36 months and then, just as automatically, to turn up again as the next election approached. This regular bout of the mid-term blues did not seem to be related to any particular economic phenomenon, but the

fitting of a quadratic trend never the less enabled some economists to claim that they had found a coherent "explanation" for the electoral cycle.

Actually, they had never really done anything more sophisticated than simply describe the fact that the mid-term blues usually happen in mid-term. Nevertheless, the breakdown in the quadratic in the last couple of years was extremely startling.

Until 1995, the popularity of the Major government followed the normal downward profile. But then, in 1996 and 1997, government popularity stubbornly refused to recover at the normal rate of about 0.7 percentage points per month. Indeed, it barely recovered at all.

The 31 per cent level of support achieved last Thursday was about 6 per cent lower than the Tories have ever experienced before, which is a measure of the shock meted out to what had previously been the most effective electoral machine in Western Europe.

The clear implication is that the electoral "switched off" the Conservative government several years ago, and from then on were not subject to the normal influences that might have made them switch back. This might prove to be very good news indeed for New Labour, since the "on" switch could prove extraordinarily difficult for the Tories to find, just as it proved murderously difficult for Labour after 1983.

Following Michael Heseltine's health tremor last week, none of the other putative candidates for the leadership can quickly persuade the warring Euro-factions to bury their hatchets, so the launch of the New Tory Party

could be at least one more election away. All this might suggest that the incoming government can get away with almost anything in its first few years, secure in the knowledge that the Tories will be unelectable for quite a while. Tax rises, here we come! But there is an alternative view.

Maybe an immediate frontal assault on the consumer – as opposed to some fiscal tightening through the company sector and restraint on public spending – would break the electorate's bond of trust with the new government just as assuredly as the Lamont/Clarke tax-raising Budgets did in 1993. Once broken, there may be no quadratic for Mr Blair to ride in the second half of his term, any more than there was one for Mr Major.

In addition, this cautionary argument continues, it is most unwise to see the Tories as a spent force. Perhaps the 1997 result simply tells us that the electorate is getting more volatile, so the eventual swing back to the Tories will be devastating.

Furthermore, for the past two elections, the swings against the Conservatives in the margins have been bigger than in the rest of the country, so their loss of seats has been hugely magnified relative to their loss of votes. When the swing back occurs, it will be Labour seats that will fall like ninepins.

A safe rule in British politics these past two centuries has been never to count out the Conservatives. For Labour to fulfil its dream of winning two complete terms, Messrs Blair, Brown and Mandelson need to remain as canny as they look, they will be perfectly aware that the 2002 election campaign has already started.

Dear doctor: Nigel Cope talks to the top corporate 'troubleshooter' recently hired to rescue Sears' struggling shoe division

## Making music bringing firms back from brink

Attempting to arrange an interview with David James, the corporate rescue specialist, is a complicated procedure.

The "company doctor", who was hired by Sears last week to sort out its loss-making shoe division, has a schedule so packed that even though he works an 80-hour week it has to operate with almost military precision. "I can do something on Thursday evening, but it would have to be after 7pm. Or it will have to be on Friday later morning because I have meetings all afternoon. Then I'm out of the country for two weeks in Thailand and Australia."

Though he does not officially start at British Shoe Corporation until 19 May he has already travelled to the group's Leicester head office to meet managers and ensure the recovery programme is making progress while he is away. Managers have been told to re-examine budgets and be prepared for a "brainstorming session" when Mr James jets in.

"I am adamant that the business should not just tread water while this programme takes place," he says.

It is a strict, no-nonsense approach that has earned him the reputation as one of Britain's top corporate "troubleshooters" along with Lewis Macpherson, who was parachuted into Stakis, the hotels group and Ken Scole who was brought in at Brent Walker.

A former director of Ford Motor Company, it was a year spent with Kenneth Cork at Cork Gully, the insolvency experts in the 1970s, that persuaded Mr James to devote his career to rescue situations. Since setting up his own consultancy in 1981 his projects have included Eagle Trust, LEP group and Davies & Newman, the holding company of the Dan Air airline.

From his small office near Victoria where he operates with a tiny staff he claims to have secured 23,000 jobs and repaid

and he still does consultancy work for Lloyd's of London.

His approach to the British Shoe job is typical of his methods. "I was asked to do the job about three weeks ago. I said I would not give them an answer until I'd seen the business and formed a view."

"I put in about a week and Sears gave me comprehensive access and allowed two finance people to take time to brief me fully."

British Shoe is certainly a patient worthy of the most able doctor's attention. A long run-

director of each trading format to "audit" the business plan for the year and submit year-end forecasts for profits and cash flow together with estimates of the next two financial years.

Each director has also been asked to submit a strategy for regenerating the business together with detailed costings. These will be externally validated by Price Waterhouse.

Mr James has also appointed JP Morgan, the merchant bank, to examine the feasibility of selling the whole group or attracting new investors.

Data rooms will be set up in New York and Hong Kong as well as London. "I think the appetite from overseas might have been under-estimated," Mr James said.

If the business cannot be sold as a single entity Mr James plans to devote special attention to solving the problems at Shoe City and Shoe Express.

This could see Dolcis and Cable & Co sold separately or merged into one of the fashion businesses such as Warehouse or Wallis to make them more attractive. The final phase is to tidy up residual matters such as the property portfolio.

"I never work on the basis of having only a single route [to resolve the problems]. One needs to have flexibility."

He says that the outlook for the 10,000 jobs in the shoe shops should be "pretty positive". However, there may be



Till death do us part: David James's packed schedule has ruled out marriage

Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra

### THE TUESDAY INTERVIEW DAVID JAMES

a total of £850m bank debt.

Yet at 59 he still finds each fresh project an exciting challenge. "I get a buzz every time and I love the learning curve. I had assumed that as I approached 60, then that might be an appropriate time to start to wind down. But it hasn't worked out that way."

He finds now that he is more likely to be called in by frustrated institutional investors rather than the banks.

Under his 12-month flat-fee contract with Sears he expects to devote half his time to the British Shoe project. The other half is spent on his non-executive directorships at Visual Action Holdings, one of the former Eagle Trust subsidiaries,

ning problem, the previous management had shrunk the chain from 14 formats to four. But even with Freeman Hardy Willis, Saxone and Mansfield gone, some of the remainder have also run into trouble.

While Dolcis and Cable & Co are trading well, the self-service Shoe Express chain and the out-of-town-Shoe City format are both struggling. British Shoe made losses of £9m last year compared with a £7.5m profit in 1995.

But Mr James has already drafted a four-point plan for the rescue. The first will see the re-grooming of the BSC group with the view to selling it as a whole to a single bidder.

He has asked the managing

more uncertainty over the 450 head office jobs and possibly the 100 positions at the central distribution centre which is also in Leicester.

The project promises to be hard work and though Sears has not disclosed the fee, rumours suggest it will be in the region of £500,000-£700,000. "I will not disclose my fee but if Sears chooses to do so then that is fine by me," he says.

Of course, it can be a dangerous business as corporate troubleshooters as they often have to make decisions which are unpopular with staff. Past projects have seen him in the midst of spanner-wielding employees on the factory floor. On one job his head office was stoned.

One also wonders if, given his long hours, he ever gets enough time to spend any of his hard-earned proceeds. "There is not a great deal of time left over. I still go to a great deal of opera and go to Ascot and Newmarket." For holidays he likes to attend music festivals.

Music is a passion. He is chairman of the English Symphony Orchestra and has created his own charity to foster interest in composition and the commissioning or works from established UK composers.

The packed portfolio means there was never time for marriage and at nearly 60 he is still single. "I literally never found the time. This business is death to relationships."

### Career file

May 97 - current	British Shoe Corporation, chairman
1996 - current	Eagle Trust, chairman and chief executive
1995 - current	Visual Action Holdings, non-exec director
1993-96	Doors of London, external member of council, chairman capital structure committee
1992-96	LEP Group, chairman
1990-92	Davies & Newman (holding company), Dan Air, chairman
1987-90	North Sea Assets, dep chairman
1984-87	Camel & Shearwood, chairman
Others	Rank Organisation (managing director), Ford Motor Company, Boyle Bank

## Electrical makers blamed for high costs

Magnus Grimond

Customers are being overcharged for electrical goods ranging from televisions to washing machines because multinational manufacturers want to maintain profits and add cachet to their brands, according to a report published today.

Large retail chains such as Dixons and those run by the regional electricity companies are exonerated from blame by Verdict, the retail consultancy, but

it says consumers are being denied choice by the dominance of manufacturers. This is preventing the growth of a discount retail sector to match that in the US, it claims.

The report comes days after the completion of a Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into the pricing and supply of electrical goods, expected to be published in the next few weeks.

Although not named in the report, multinational groups like Sony, Panasonic and Philips have

been put into the firing line by Verdict some three years after being the target of similar criticism.

Richard Perks, one of the consultants on the report, said: "What we are saying is the problems of the industry are due to the dominant influence of manufacturers, not because of any collusion by retailers themselves, which one might believe given the uniformity of their prices."

"What we think manufacturers are doing is supporting smaller retailers and not giving

the bigger retailers the scale of support you would expect, given their buying advantage."

He said it was right that retailers charged for advice and other extras, but there was also a place for a discount sector where people could buy goods off the shelf at low prices.

The report comes two years after Nurdin & Pescoc, the cash-and-carry group, was forced to close its fledgling Cargo Club discount store chain after just a year of operation. It

blamed tighter planning regulations, but Nurdin, since taken over by Booker, had also complained to the Office of Fair Trading after Sony, Panasonic, JVC and Toshiba refused to supply electrical goods to the group.

Mr Perks also said the role of the independent retailer was declining. "No matter how much the manufacturers may do to support the smaller stores, it's virtually impossible to sell on the high street because the margins are so small."

## Exercise good for firms' wealth

Clifford German

Prevention is not just better than cure, it is also cheaper when it comes to treating the problems caused by working days lost through sickness.

In Britain days off through sickness cost employers £533 per employee last year according to the CBI, a 20 per cent rise in just two years. In the US, medical costs quadrupled in 20 years to more than \$1,000bn (£625bn) and employers paid an estimated 30-40 per cent of the bills.

The answer, according to David Giampaolo, managing director of Forza group, which makes fitness equipment for health clubs and gyms, is healthy exercise encouraged by employers.

Employers can save money through reduced insurance premiums on group medical schemes for employees as well as by reducing days lost to illness.

Forza has sponsored a report on the economic benefits of regular exercise. It claims that 70

per cent of all illnesses are linked to the lifestyle of the individual, and half of all medical costs are attributable to illnesses that could be prevented.

It concludes that companies can save substantial sums by investing in healthcare schemes which pay back in improved productivity, higher morale, lower healthcare costs and reduced staff turnover.

Health clubs patrons are off work for an average of 2.11 days a year compared with 3.06 days for inactive employees.

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## sport

CRICKET: Essex skipper inspires rout of Somerset as Surrey savage Hampshire in the Benson and Hedges Cup

## Prichard peppers the boundaries

DEREK PRINGLE  
reports from Chelmsford  
Somerset 269-8  
Essex 270  
Essex win by eight wickets

This was a match between two sides of contrasting styles: conventional Essex against the top-savvy cricket of Somerset as envisaged by their new coach, Dermot Reeve. Surprisingly, in a form of the game that is forever mutating, convention won hands down, a personal best of 114 by Paul Prichard rendering a high-scoring match a virtual

no-contest as Essex secured victory with more than seven overs to spare. Essex have yet to lose a game in any competition this season. This win means they are more or less guaranteed a home tie for the quarter-final round in three weeks' time. They still have to play Ireland in Downpatrick, but with three wins already, a pre-match Guinness or two is unlikely to incur the captain's disapproval.

Indeed Prichard, currently enjoying a rich vein of form, is quite likely to be buying the first round. After a winter spent recuperating from an operation

on his back, he has recovered both his touch and confidence, the latter's fluctuations having been caused mainly by a horrendous injury in 1987 when he had his right index finger shattered by a beamer from a raw Allan Donald.

On a pitch of even bounce and pace, Somerset simply found it impossible to bowl at him. By picking the length early, he can cut and pull deliveries that others would merely be content to defend with a dead bat. Even Andrew Caddick, a likely member of England's Test attack this summer, was unable to command his respect and Prichard punctured the field at will as he and Law put on 202 for the first wicket.

It is not often a player of Law's calibre is outscored as the Australian was over the early part of the innings. However, it was not long before Essex's overseas player began to get back on terms, and he fairly assaulted Mushtaq Ahmed's first over as three sumptuous fours came from three different strokes, each clattering into the boundary boards in a different part of the ground.

The Pakistani leg-spinner, who had overwhelmed Ireland with seven wickets a few days ago, was clearly carrying a sore knee, apparently injured while carrying his cricket bag up the pavilion stairs. After Essex's roaring start (100-0 after 15 overs) Somerset needed him to be at his best. Unfortunately for them, his first over cost 31 runs, whereas he spent the remainder of the innings hobbling about in the field.

Having a progressive coach running the show is never dull and the Somerset innings was full of the machinations of Reeve's beryperative mind. Michael Barnes, who followed his old cap from Warwickshire, scored 91 before playing across a straight on from Paul Grayson's left-arm spin.

Mushtaq, his knee injury strangely yet to reveal itself, was promoted and merrily clocked up a rapid 31 as Somerset tried to increase their momentum. In the end, a well-paced innings of 64 by Richard Harden pushed Somerset past the 260 mark.

It was only after the assault by Prichard and Law that everyone realised how inadequate that total was.



Mushtaq Ahmed hooks Ronnie Irani as he rattles up 31 runs at Chelmsford yesterday

Photograph: Peter Jay

## Taylor lifts Sussex Smith ups the pace

## ROUND-UP

Neil Taylor struck a superb 116 to help Sussex to a 34-run victory against Gloucestershire in the Benson and Hedges Cup at Hove yesterday.

Sussex, recovering from a poor start, amassed 273 for 4 after choosing to bat, with Gloucestershire falling short despite Jack Russell's 66 off 72 balls.

The spinners Amer Khan and Nicky Phillips both claimed three wickets as the visitors were dismissed with 15 deliveries remaining.

Taylor, the former Kent captain, put Sussex firmly on top in a third-wicket stand of 208 off 34 overs with Mark Newell, who made 87 on his debut in the competition. This set a new Sussex record for any wicket in the B&H Cup and took Taylor past 2,000 runs in the competition.

Taylor, who slow start saw him take 31 deliveries to reach a further 31 balls, doing so in

emphatic style by sweeping the spinner Richard Davis for six. Taylor powered to his 100 off only 39 more deliveries and had hammered 11 fours and a six when he was run out with two overs of the innings remaining.

Sussex must now beat Surrey in their final group game to have any chance of reaching the quarter-finals.

Kent kept their 100 per cent record in the competition by beating British Universities for four wickets at Canterbury yesterday. Nigel Long, with 75 off 65 balls, guided them home with five overs to spare. Kent, however, may be without their slow left-arm Min Patel, who played in two Tests for England last year, for the rest of the season. Patel has a knee injury.

Sussex, hoping to beat Surrey and Warwickshire to be the first county to play a Sunday League match under lights, have confirmed that the fixture against Essex at Hove on Monday 16 June has been rescheduled for the previous day.

## HENRY BLOFIELD

reports from Edgbaston  
Warwickshire 233-8  
Yorkshire 14-0

The weather spoiled what was building up into a fascinating evening's cricket yesterday. Warwickshire's captain, Andy Moles, may have briefly considered bowling first on a pitch with a green tinge, but it was a fine morning and, with a bad forecast for later, he sensibly chose to bat.

On a pitch which allowed some movement and had a sweat-soaked bounce, batting was never easy and Warwickshire were indebted to a typically compelling innings at the start by Neil Smith, whose 57 included nine fours and took only 61 balls.

He was helped by four poor overs from Chris Silverwood, who bowled short and wide and was gleefully dispatched to the square boundary by Smith. When, in compensation, he over-pitched, he was 'n-dri-

ven and later Smith drove both Peter Hartley and Craig White through the covers.

By then, Moles's poor trot had continued when, without any real footwork, he pushed at Darren Gough and edged the ball into his stumps. White's first ball straight to short midwicket.

There were a few good strokes from David Hemp including a pull for six off Hartley. At 94, Smith carved White to deep cover and two runs later Hemp was yorked in Michael Vaughan's first over of off-spin. After then, Dominic Ostler, Trevor Penney and Graeme Welch all made useful contributions to a total which may prove to be big enough.

Rain lengthened the interval and in the third over of the Yorkshire innings there was another break. In the final spell of three overs in ever-worsening light Yorkshire will have been grateful not to lose a wicket, although they still have plenty to do.

## Bicknell's spell sparks collapse

DAVID LLEWELLYN

reports from Southampton  
Surrey 228-9  
Hampshire 63  
Surrey win by 165 runs

To Surrey a crushing victory and two crucial points to leave them with a good chance of qualifying for the knock-out stages of the Benson and Hedges Cup. To Simon Renshaw, the Hampshire seamer, a share of the honours. Renshaw, 23, helped complete a bizarre Hampshire double. Three days earlier, in the same competition, John Stephenson, their captain, had recorded the worst bowling figures (2 for 79) by any Hampshire player in the Cup.

In yesterday's rain-interrupted day Renshaw picked up six for 25 – the best figures by any Hampshire bowler in the 50-over competition. Not that it did his side any good. Their batting let them down again and they slipped to their second heaviest defeat in the Cup. They have now lost all six of their one-day matches this season.

They were five wickets down with just 23 runs on the board, thanks to a spell of 3 for 0 in seven deliveries by Martin Bicknell. Few sides come back from that position – Surrey, as it happens, are the exception. They can, and did, wriggle out of a sticky situation, but they bristle

with aggressive strokeplayers.

Hampshire do not. Matthew Keetch spent an hour reaching 20 and Paul Whitaker's duck took 30 minutes as Surrey's four seamers dominated. By then the best had gone.

Hampshire crept past their lowest total – 50 against Yorkshire at Headingley in 1991 – but not by much. Surrey also had the edge in the field. James Knott (son of England and Kent's Alan) pulled off a stunning catch to dismiss Matthew Hayden, and Ben Hollis took a scorching drive at mid-off from Dimitri Mascarenhas. But Surrey could have subsided to little themselves, stumbling as they did at the start. Their normally tough top order had all the resilience of wet tissue as four wickets fell for 22.

It called for some discipline and Adam Hollis, their captain, obliged. In 99 balls of graft and craft Hollis guided them back into the realms of respectability earning himself the gold award. He and Nadeem Shahid (52) chipped away at the Hampshire attack and put on 138 for the fifth wicket.

Hollis reached 80 before being let to the first brilliant catch, his Hampshire counterpart John Stephenson sprinting 30 yards to deep midwicket to take a stunning catch over his shoulder. By then though Hollis had done enough to restore Surrey fortunes

## RACING RESULTS

## CONCASTER

2.20: 1. JACKSON (F) 9-2; 2. On One 2-1; 3. French Mid 12-1; 4. 10-1; 5. 10-1; 6. 10-1; 7. 10-1; 8. 10-1; 9. 10-1; 10. 10-1; 11. 10-1; 12. 10-1; 13. 10-1; 14. 10-1; 15. 10-1; 16. 10-1; 17. 10-1; 18. 10-1; 19. 10-1; 20. 10-1; 21. 10-1; 22. 10-1; 23. 10-1; 24. 10-1; 25. 10-1; 26. 10-1; 27. 10-1; 28. 10-1; 29. 10-1; 30. 10-1; 31. 10-1; 32. 10-1; 33. 10-1; 34. 10-1; 35. 10-1; 36. 10-1; 37. 10-1; 38. 10-1; 39. 10-1; 40. 10-1; 41. 10-1; 42. 10-1; 43. 10-1; 44. 10-1; 45. 10-1; 46. 10-1; 47. 10-1; 48. 10-1; 49. 10-1; 50. 10-1; 51. 10-1; 52. 10-1; 53. 10-1; 54. 10-1; 55. 10-1; 56. 10-1; 57. 10-1; 58. 10-1; 59. 10-1; 60. 10-1; 61. 10-1; 62. 10-1; 63. 10-1; 64. 10-1; 65. 10-1; 66. 10-1; 67. 10-1; 68. 10-1; 69. 10-1; 70. 10-1; 71. 10-1; 72. 10-1; 73. 10-1; 74. 10-1; 75. 10-1; 76. 10-1; 77. 10-1; 78. 10-1; 79. 10-1; 80. 10-1; 81. 10-1; 82. 10-1; 83. 10-1; 84. 10-1; 85. 10-1; 86. 10-1; 87. 10-1; 88. 10-1; 89. 10-1; 90. 10-1; 91. 10-1; 92. 10-1; 93. 10-1; 94. 10-1; 95. 10-1; 96. 10-1; 97. 10-1; 98. 10-1; 99. 10-1; 100. 10-1; 101. 10-1; 102. 10-1; 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## Waiting game

Rangers fail to secure Scottish championship after defeat, page 23

## sport

## Ball boys

The day's Benson and Hedges cricket action, page 22

**BATTLE FOR THE PREMIERSHIP:** No singing in the rain for champions as Brazilian playmaker inspires Boro

# Solskjaer keeps United on course

PHIL SHAW

Manchester United  
Middlesbrough

3  
3

Manchester United remain on course to retain the title, although when Middlesbrough swept into a 3-1 lead in an Old Trafford epic yesterday the 55,000 crowd were clinging to the reign rather than singing in the rain.

Demonstrating that they are a team for all seasons, United retrieved a two-goal deficit on a pitch which often resembled a lake, exactly as they had done in searing heat at Leicester 48 hours earlier. But Middlesbrough, despite losing Fabrizio Ravanelli to a torn hamstring that makes him doubtful for the FA Cup final, refused to relinquish a vital point towards their struggle against relegation.

United will be crowned champions for the fourth time in five seasons if both Newcastle and Liverpool lose in London tonight. Even if both their rivals keep up the pursuit, they have two further opportunities to secure the victory that would enable them to take the trophy in front of their own fans for the first time since 1965: against Newcastle on Thursday and West Ham on Sunday.

Middlesbrough must also earn two fixtures, at Blackburn and Leeds, and might need to win both to survive. Without the 31-goal Italian, it will be a tall order, yet to judge by this performance they may have just enough fire to overcome the inevitable fatigue.

If anything, United showed greater signs of strain. For much of the first half, a Middlesbrough side inspired by the genius of Juninho exposed an uncertainty at the heart of Alex Ferguson's defence which should encourage Messrs Harrison and Kinson, let alone Shearer and Ferdinand. "The worst we've defended in six years," the United manager complained.



Strike one: Gary Neville drills home his first senior goal for Manchester United during yesterday's 3-3 home draw with Middlesbrough

Photograph: Allsport

## Ravanelli may miss Cup final

Middlesbrough's Italian striker Fabrizio Ravanelli is likely to miss the FA Cup final because of the injury he suffered in yesterday's match, his manager, Bryan Robson, said afterwards. "Fabrizio has torn a hamstring and is very doubtful for the last two League games and FA Cup final," Robson said. "We'll know more tomorrow. This is precisely why we complain about the number of games we are forced to play close together. We have always said players are going to be injured."

Robson added: "I thought the turning point was the second goal which we gave away too quickly after going 3-1 up. But it's still a vital point for us. It brings us closer to those above us and if we win a game then we will go level on points with them and then our better goal difference comes into play."

Alex Ferguson, the Manchester United manager, was glowing in his praise for Middlesbrough's Juninho, but castigated his defence for another slipshod display. "Juninho was the best player on the pitch, absolutely magnificent. I find it amazing he was overlooked when they gave out the players of the year awards," Ferguson said.

"I will give credit to the team for fighting back, there is no doubting their character and determination. But I have to say the defending today has been terrible. It has been in quite a few games recently which has given them a breather and a lifeline."

"Three against Derby, two at Leicester - we've conceded 23 goals against the bottom seven teams. You don't win games if you defend as hard as that. We can put our finger on some things that are going wrong and we will try to sort it. When you score three goals at home you should win. It was bad defending and we will try to correct that for Newcastle."

"But credit to the players - they kept going, their attitude and determination was wonderful. When you look at Saturday and again today, there's something there that tells you we're hard to beat, even if we are giving goals away. We were unlucky not to win in the end."

The Boro captain, Nigel Pearson, said: "It's great to get a point but I hope we don't live to rue the fact we were 3-1 up. With four games in eight days, we would have settled for a point beforehand, but we're still in with a chance. We possibly need to win both our remaining matches now and it will be tough at Blackburn and Leeds, but the players showed today they can meet the challenge."

Manchester United (4-3-1-2): Schuster; G. Neville, May, Paterson, Javier Becham, Jonsson (Scholtes, 73), Keane; Cantona; Solskjaer, Cole. Substitutes not used: P. Neville, McCluskey, Robinson, Van der Sar and Middlesbrough (4-4-1-1): Roberts; Fleming, Pearson, Fetto, Blackburn; Stamp, Mustoe, Emerson (Pinder, 87), Higginbotham, 75; Juninho, Ravanelli (Freestone, 75). Substitutes not used: Cox, Whyte. Referee: D. Gallagher (Barnsley).

A year to the day after regaining the championship by overcoming Middlesbrough at the Riverside Stadium, United found Bryan Robson's team more resilient on his return to the theatre of dreams. It was more like a theatre of streams, with so much rain falling during

the match, but Boro initially made light of both the conditions and their parlous position to drive forward with a purpose that belied their draining schedule.

Ravanelli had already shaken Peter Schmeichel's left-hand upright before they took the lead with a sumptuous goal af-

ter 15 minutes. In a patient build-up of 13 passes, which took them from the left-back position to the inside-right channel and then left again, Juninho was involved on five occasions. The Brazilian's last touch, after Craig Fignett spotted him overlapping, was to angle the ball beyond the goalkeeper for his 14th goal of the season.

A flurry of four goals in eight minutes took both teams through the gamut of emotions. Middlesbrough were probably distracted by the melodrama of Ravanelli's injury when their goal fell in the 34th minute.

Andy Cole, spinning sharply near the penalty spot, saw his shot blocked by Gianluca Festa. But the ball broke to Roy Keane, who drilled in only his second goal of the campaign. Only then did Ravanelli bobble off clutching his thigh.

Yet within five minutes, Boro were two goals to the good, having again shown what a fine side they can be going forward. Juninho launched the move which restored their advantage, contemptuously skipping past Gary Neville before seeking out Chris Freestone. With his first touch of the game, Ravanelli's replacement played in Emerson,

who bludgeoned a first-time shot home off the underside of the bar.

United were still trying to take in their plight when it deepened. Another sweet exchange of passes, again involving Freestone, saw Robbie

Ben Roberts, Cole and the strangely ineffectual Eric Cantona worked the ball wide for Gary Neville to bullet a diagonal drive past the keeper for his first senior goal.

For most of the second half, Middlesbrough were pushed

grey sky like shells. But when Gary Neville ploughed forward to cross, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer materialised unmarked to head his 18th goal of a remarkable first season.

The drama would have been complete had the referee awarded a penalty after Denis Irwin fell under a challenge from Phil Stamp with five minutes remaining. The only doubt appeared to centre on whether it was a foul or obstruction, which would have produced a free-kick. Mr Gallagher, lenient to the last, had detected neither offence.

Middlesbrough thus left Old Trafford having played a full part in a six-goal spectacular, less than a month after sharing an identical scoreline with Chelsea at the same venue. On that occasion they went on to succeed at the second attempt. Neutrals may now be hoping for a similar outcome, if only to guarantee the continued presence of Juninho in the English game.

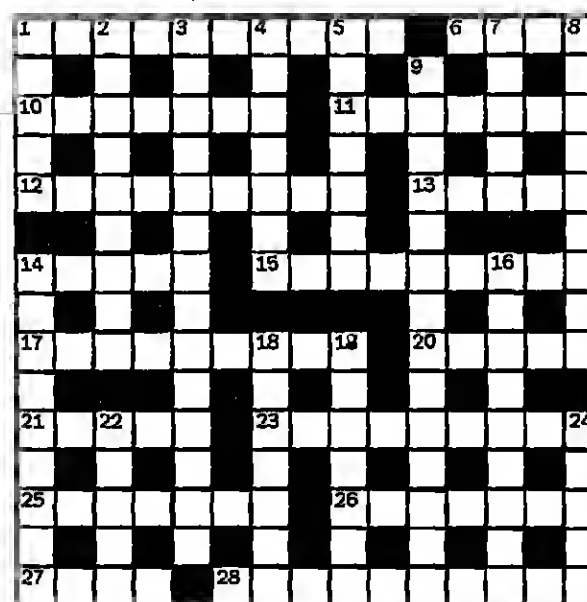
Manchester United (4-3-1-2): Schuster; G. Neville, May, Paterson, Javier Becham, Jonsson (Scholtes, 73), Keane; Cantona; Solskjaer, Cole. Substitutes not used: P. Neville, McCluskey, Robinson, Van der Sar and Middlesbrough (4-4-1-1): Roberts; Fleming, Pearson, Fetto, Blackburn; Stamp, Mustoe, Emerson (Pinder, 87), Higginbotham, 75; Juninho, Ravanelli (Freestone, 75). Substitutes not used: Cox, Whyte. Referee: D. Gallagher (Barnsley).

## THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3292 Tuesday 6 May

By Aired

Monday's Solution



1 DOWN  
2 ACROSS  
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27 DOWN  
28 ACROSS

### ACROSS

- One's run out to get a phone for the car (10)
- A fateful time for Caesar - perishes as day moves on? (4)
- Great as dispersant? (4,3)
- Get rid of a nasty boil quickly (7)
- Cheer cuts in turnips? (4,5)
- It could stretch from New York to West London (5)
- One's turn to go in - farewell (5)
- See troublesome goat annoy ruminant (5,4)
- Accident on motorway's a possibility (9)
- Present that's rejected by mocking person (5)
- Broadcasting commercial in SA port (5)

### DOWN

- Apparel in game's protecting cheek (4,5)
- Spa town's dull item for those having taken the waters? (4,3)
- Talk idly about one male church leader (7)
- Noble losing yen ahead of time (4)
- Food at rear of boat going to China? (3,7)
- One on stage about to go over to right (5)
- They retain the heat; it eases foreign company within (3-6)
- Gets big after a spell which can confuse the perception (5,9)
- Instrument which is an advantage when securing a ship (7)
- Entanglement in which one is eaten by big cat (7)

### ROUTINE COULD MAKE DOCTOR UNWELL (5)

- Rich spent recklessly? This could make things tight (9)
- Might one get sound calculating advice from these bodies? (6,8)
- Notice island with an edge on the up-and-up? It's choice (9)
- To perform ceremonies one's getting by in workplace (9)
- It's pretty well a certainty hard hat will be ruined by this chemical (7)
- Cut off city speakers on Spain (7)
- Put off side terrifying insiders (5)
- Woman has space to show brilliance (5)

## Everton focus on Bayer coach

ALAN NIXON

Christoph Daum, a leading German coach, has emerged as a surprise candidate to become the new manager of Everton. Daum has helped Bayer Leverkusen contest the Bundesliga title race with Bayern Munich and German sources revealed that he has been in contact with Peter Johnson, the Everton chairman.

Daum is regarded as one of Germany's finest coaches and has previously won the championship with Stuttgart and, significantly, he is on good

terms with Jurgen Klinsmann, the world class striker who is unsettled at Bayern Munich.

Johnson is keen to recruit Klinsmann and the possibility of Daum arriving to work with him is gathering credibility. Johnson is expected to meet Klinsmann today. Everton are interested in offering him a lucrative contract to move to Merseyside, even though there is no indication who would be managing Everton next season.

Daum has also been mentioned as a possible successor to Fabio Capello at Real Madrid along with Jupp Heynckes, who is at Tenerife. Everton will have to move quickly if they want to secure his services.

Johnson was at one stage also refusing to rule out the possibility of the Barcelona coach, Bobby Robson, taking charge. However, Robson has tied himself to the Nou Camp for the remaining year of his contract, and

a subsequent Everton statement accepted this. A Goodison spokesman said: "Mr Robson has informed us he is not available. He has decided he is staying at Barcelona to see out the final year of his contract."

Johnson said: "Bobby is one of four men we are interested in. We cannot say or do anything until he is released from his contract by Barcelona."

Hereford's relegation into the GM Vauxhall Conference

has been confirmed after the League's bottom side were briefly given hope of a reprieve.

The Football League are expected to discuss recommendations to invite 16 Conference clubs into a regionalised Third Division, which could have included Hereford. But a League spokesman said yesterday that nothing would be decided in time for the coming season.

Hereford's fate was sealed on Saturday, when they could only draw 1-1 with Brighton. They will be replaced in the Third Division by Macclesfield, the Conference winners.

# ORGANISE

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UK BANKS AND BUILDING SOCIETIES

## DIRECT Debit

DD YOUR DOUGH

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